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John White Alexander (1856–1915): In search of the decorative. (Volumes I and II)

Moore, Sarah J., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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JOHN WHITE ALEXANDER (1856-1915): IN SEARCH OF THE DECORATIVE

by

Sarah J. Moore

Volume 1

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1992

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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AAIAL	American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York
AIC	Art Institute of Chicago
CI	Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh
CMA	Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh
DIA	Detroit Institute of Arts
FGA	Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution Washington, D. C.
HRM	Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York
LACMA	Los Angeles County Museum of Art
LoC	Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
MdO	Musée d'Orsay, Paris
MFAB	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
MMA	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
NAD	National Academy of Design, New York
NGA	National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
NMAA	National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.
NPG	National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.
NYHS	The New-York Historical Society
PAFA	Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
PMA	Philadelphia Museum of Art
RISD	Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
TBM	The Brooklyn Museum

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INTRODUCTION

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, American art's internationalism and cosmopolitanism were perhaps it most characteristic features. Informed by a generation of artists who sought foreign training and who self-consciously aligned themselves with international ideals and practices, American art reveled and triumphed in its very lack of "Americanness." As Henry James wrote in 1887, "It sounds like a paradox, but it is a very simple truth, that when to-day we look for 'American art' we find it mainly in Paris. When we find it out of Paris, we at least find a great deal of Paris in it."[1] During this period, unprecedented numbers of American artists returned from periods of study abroad with new styles and a familiarity with both the great art of the past and internationally current trends. The increased attention to art making and formal issues, in contrast with antebellum concern with native subject matter and narrative, characterized the work of foreign-trained artists, many of whose careers were distinguished by international honors and critical approbation in the foreign and American press.[2] Exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic displayed internationally current styles which emphasized the primacy of formal concerns and decorative aesthetics with little

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regard to subject matter per se, realism, or national expression.

John White Alexander (1856-1915) developed and flourished during this period of American art's internationalism and cosmopolitanism. Alexander's decorative figure painting style of the 1890s, based on the simplification and flattening of form through surface patterning, elegant linear contours, asymmetrical compositions, and a restricted palette with a single dominant tone, was the result of an informed search for a viable style that could accommodate his interest in figure and portrait painting and decorative aesthetics. The currency of his decorative style brought him to the forefront of American expatriate artists in the 1890s and assured his international success. Alexander's reputation following his Parisian Salon debut in 1893 ascended at a meteoric rate and was distinguished by such honors as his being elected Sociétaire of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (1894), the purchase of Portrait gris, 1893 by the French government for the Musée du Luxembourg (1898), and his being named Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur (1901).

The annual Salons of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris provided the institutional matrix within which Alexander fully articulated his decorative style. His paintings were regularly discussed in the critical press as consonant with those by many of his foreign and American

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colleagues at the Nationale which, informed by the pervasive and resonant influence of Whistler, eliminated extra-aesthetic concerns, assumed the triumph of technique, and declared the independence of art from representation, moralism, or didacticism. Moreover, Alexander's association with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, whose internationalism was a central factor in its organization and informed critical discussion of its annual Salons, signalled his direct and vital involvement with several international art organizations and exhibitions during his expatriate years--1892 to 1901--including the Carnegie Institute international annuals, the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, London, and the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle.

Coincident with Alexander's repatriation in 1901 was the gradual erosion of American art's internationalism and the decline of the expatriate movement in general. The articulation of nationalism--that is, a distinct and identifiable American language of art--increasingly dominated American art activities during the first years of the twentieth century and represented a fundamental shift away from the internationalism and cosmopolitanism that had characterized American art in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The resurgence of nationalism and the search for an American iconography was a complicated movement and agreements on its meaning, direction, and

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appropriate subject matter were not immediately forthcoming. Alexander's response to these fundamental changes in American art can be seen both in his professional activities and in his work. His subsequent zealous dedication to the cause of American art, culminating in his presidency of the National Academy of Design from 1909 to 1915, increasingly overshadowed his own production of paintings. His attempts to accommodate and adapt the vocabulary of his decorative style, which had been articulated in a decidedly international context, to a new interest in nationalism characterized his work for the rest of his career.

American art historical scholarship has flourished in the last two decades, particularly in its consideration of the late nineteenth century and its examination of such significant yet previously ignored or overlooked issues as internationalism and cosmopolitanism, the impact of foreign training, and the rise of decorative figure painting as the dominant mode in American art with the consequent decline of landscape painting. Exhibitions and critical studies on American expatriate painters of the late nineteenth century, the American Renaissance 1876-1917, American art between the World's Fairs 1876-1893, the impact of French training on American artists, American art at the Paris Salons, and American Impressionism within an international context, among others, have significantly broadened our perceptions

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of late nineteenth-century American art while providing methodological models for revisionist scholarship.[3] Numerous monographic studies reconstructing the careers of artists whose renown in their own time is matched by either virtual obscurity or the most summary examination in ours, add to the burgeoning pool of resources and are beginning to fill the cavernous gaps in late nineteenth-century American art historical scholarship.

This dissertation on John White Alexander is framed within the context of revisionist activity in American art history which, at its best, aims to present the aesthetic, cultural, historical, and critical matrix in which work was produced and discussed. By expanding upon the limitations of art historical constructs that have isolated works of art from their historical milieu or have ignored trends and practices that fell outside of a narrow and rigidly defined discourse, such revisionist activity is deliberately expansive and broad rather than reductive, inclusive rather than exclusive. Moreover, such a centrifugal rather than centripetal approach mirrors the complexity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where the confluence of styles and influences defies even the hardiest attempts at simple categorization.

As a monographic study, this dissertation aims to fill the lacuna created by the lack of any rigorous scholarship on Alexander and to provide a coherent narrative of his rich

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and prolific artistic production. More important, however, the dissertation is designed to stretch the limited and artificial boundaries of a monographic study by locating and interpreting Alexander's Parisian period (1892-1901), which was his most prolific and inventive, within the international topography of American art at the end of the nineteenth century. An examination of Alexander's career within this broader context reveals his work at the intersection of some of the most compelling current discourses on internationalism and cosmopolitanism, decorative painting and its relationship to the advent of modernism, the primacy of formal concerns with little regard to subject matter, and the rise of mural painting. His work after 1901 is considered within the context of the resurgence of nationalism in American art after the turn of the twentieth century. As such, the dissertation is not intended to be an exhaustive catalogue raisonné or a strict biography. Rather it examines the institutional complexes within which Alexander practiced and flourished, the critical reception of his work, and the evolution of his decorative style as an expression and synthesis of internationally current aesthetic ideals and practices rather than as an isolated and self-referential development of a personal style.

The term "decorative" was used repeatedly in the contemporary critical press to describe both Alexander's

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work in particular, and the pervasive, international trend away from realism toward formal considerations in art--art for art's sake. The term "decorative," and its implications, are analyzed in detail. Moreover, most paintings are considered within the framework of the exhibitions where they first appeared and the critical discussion they engendered. As such, the majority of Alexander's portrait commissions, particularly those painted after the turn of the century, remain beyond the consideration of this study as they were not publicly exhibited or discussed. It was in his images of women in particular that Alexander fully articulated his decorative style. Alexander's choice of subject matter paralleled internationally current practices and is examined as both the locus of Alexander's decorative style and as reflective of contemporary assumptions and ideals about the role of women in art and society. The portraits of men, with key exceptions, are little discussed.

The extensive primary critical material, on which the dissertation is largely based, provides a contemporary narrative on Alexander's position within the internationalism of late nineteenth-century American art while forming the basis of a broad and comprehensive picture of the historical and aesthetic context in which Alexander practiced. Alexander's two major mural commissions (Library of Congress, 1896, and Carnegie Institute, 1905-08) are

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examined within the context of his decorative style and the development of American mural painting. His attempts to reconcile the demands of realism and nationalism with his decorative style in these murals are considered in relation to his easel painting, particularly in his work after 1901. Finally, Alexander's administrative activities, which increasingly overshadowed his artistic production after his return to the United States in 1901, are tangential to the dissertation and are considered only within the context of their demonstration of current aesthetic issues and practices.

Chapter one provides basic biographical information and discusses Alexander's activities up to 1881, including his work as an illustrator at Harper's Weekly, New York (1875-77) and his student years in Munich and Venice (1877-81). The years 1875 to 1881 were formative in Alexander's career and established the methodological and aesthetic foundation upon which his style would evolve in the 1880s. Alexander's early experiences as an illustrator introduced him to a rapid, sketchy pictorial style which he maintained to some degree for the rest of his career. His brief academic training in Munich at the Royal Academy followed by more extensive exposure to advanced art techniques and ideas at the side of Duveneck and others in Polling provided him with a basic artistic armature and a fluency with pictorial technique. Although Alexander would abandon the tenebrous,

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painterly Munich style in the 1880s, his restricted tonal palette, enduring commitment to portraiture, and belief in the primacy of technique were potent residues of his foreign training experience. Finally, contact with Whistler in Venice was the beginning of what was to be one of the most compelling influences on the evolution of Alexander's decorative style.

The development of Alexander's mature decorative style, as revealed in his illustrations and portraits of the 1880s is the subject of chapter two. American art in the 1880s was characterized by its realignment with international art ideals and practices and the triumph of aestheticism. Informed largely by foreign, particularly Parisian, training of American artists in the decades immediately following the Civil War, American art ideals shifted away from antebellum preoccupation with native landscape and narrative to figure painting, a concern with formal values, and internationally current styles. Alexander's work in the 1880s centered on portraiture, largely the result of commissions from Harper's and later the Century Company, while his style was marked by an attempt to reconcile the demands of realism with those of aestheticism. The facts of appearance remained a central aspect of Alexander's style in this decade, particularly in his portraits of men, yet formal concerns began to compete for attention. It was in images of women in particular that Alexander's aestheticism emerged with two-dimensional

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pictorial structure and decorative treatment of the figure as its animating impulses. The decorative potential of portraiture and figure painting and the primacy of formal concerns were increasingly steady, if selective, currents in his work in the second half of the 1880s. In the 1890s, they would become the guiding principles of Alexander's style.

Alexander's Parisian period (1892-1901), during which time he came to the forefront of American expatriate painters and achieved international recognition, is the subject of chapters three and four. Chapter three examines the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts as the institutional complex within which Alexander flourished and fully articulated his decorative style. Decorative figure painting dominated the Nationale's annual Salons, which were a showcase for relatively progressive art that mediated between academic realism and more modern styles. Alexander's Salon debut in Paris in 1893 stands as a turning point in his career. Stylistically, it marked the decisive departure from the restrained and selective aestheticism that characterized his work in the 1880s in favor of decorative treatment of the figure. Moreover, Alexander's association with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, whose internationalism was a central factor in its organization, signalled his direct and vital involvement with international art organizations and exhibitions which would

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distinguish his artistic career during his expatriate years. Alexander's mural commission at the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. (1896), is considered within the context of his decorative style and the evolution of American mural painting.

Chapter four examines Alexander's annual submissions to the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts Salons, 1897 to 1899, as well as his involvement with other international exhibitions including those of the Carnegie Institute and the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers. Alexander's participation in the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle and the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition are considered within the context of the vicissitudes of internationalism of American art. A fundamental shift in priorities toward more decidedly "American" concerns characterized much of American art at the turn of the twentieth century, which witnessed a general decline in the expatriate movement with a coincident focus on nationalism and the articulation of a distinctly American language of art. Alexander's most striking response to these fundamental changes in American art was his repatriation in 1901.

Chapter five considers Alexander's work after his return to the United States until his death in 1915. In addition to exhibiting widely, including holding several one-person exhibitions, Alexander became involved with the

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development and promotion of American art. His presidency of the National Academy of Design from 1909 until shortly before his death in 1915 marked that commitment on a national scale. Coincident with Alexander's return to the United States was the gradual erosion of the internationalism of American art. The issue of nationalism came to dominate American art exhibitions and critical discourse in the early twentieth century, much as issues of internationalism and cosmopolitanism had dominated critical discourse in the 1880s and 1890s. Alexander's attempts to accommodate the vocabulary of his decorative style with the new demands for nationalism and the search for an American iconography characterized his work in his post-expatriate period. The confluence of Alexander's decorative style, which was articulated in a distinctly international context, and modern American subject matter distinguished Alexander's vast mural cycle at the Carnegie Institute (1905-08, the cycle remained unfinished at his death). The decorative ensemble's success and failure are due to Alexander's attempts to reconcile the dual appeals of decorative aesthetics and nationalism.

Alexander's later figure paintings were characterized by a general attenuation of his decorative style. A new interest in the effects of sunlight on the figure indoors resulted in the de-emphasis and diffusion of bold linear patterning and rigorous pictorial structure that had

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distinguished his paintings in the 1890s. Moreover, his compositions became less cohesive and more formulaic with the introduction of elements that served narrative and referential rather than pictorial purposes.

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ENDNOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. Henry James, "John S. Sargent," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 75, no. 449 (October 1887): 683.

2. For a discussion of the impact of foreign training on American artists and the American expatriate movement, see H. Barbara Weinberg, The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991); idem, "Late Nineteenth-Century Painting: Cosmopolitan Concerns and Critical Controversies," Archives of American Art Journal 23, no. 4 (1983): 19-26; and Michael Quick, American Expatriate Painters of the Late Nineteenth Century (Dayton: Dayton Art Institute, 1976).

3. See, for example, Weinberg, The Lure of Paris; Quick, Expatriate Painters; Brooklyn Museum, American Renaissance, 1876 - 1917 (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1979); Detroit Institute of Arts, The Quest for Unity: American Art Between World's Fairs 1876 - 1893 (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1983); Lois Marie Fink, American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990); and William H. Gerdts, "Impressionism in the United States," in Norma Broude, ed., World Impressionism: The International Movement 1860 - 1920 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), pp. 36-69.

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CHAPTER 1

1856 - 1881
EARLY LIFE, ILLUSTRATION 1875-1877
EUROPEAN TRAINING 1877-1881

John White Alexander was born October 7, 1856 in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, now part of Pittsburgh.[1] Alexander's parents, John and Fanny (Smith), were Scottish-Irish Presbyterians and lived with Fanny's family, who had come from northern Ireland and settled in Pennsylvania in the 1820s. Of modest means--Fanny's father was a teller at a Pittsburgh bank--and supporting Fanny's sisters Mary and Elizabeth, the Smiths rigidly adhered to a strictly religious way of life with uncompromising thoroughness.

Tragedy marked John and Fanny Alexander's married life from the start. Fanny, always in frail health, lost her first child, a daughter, before John White was born. Shortly after the birth of her only son, her husband, John Alexander, died leaving Fanny disconsolate. In 1860, consumption shifted the vicissitudes of Fanny's health to the worse. As she died, young John witnessed the horrors of her death at her bedside in order, as his grandparents insisted, that he be profoundly aware of the uncertainties of life. Alexander recalled in 1876, "I have a very distinct recollection of my mother's death. Can remember being in the room, sitting in an old-fashioned rocking chair, and how she suffered. And can even see the people

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standing by the bed - some putting wet cloths on her head, yet I can't remember any one person who was there."[2]

A restless and spirited adolescent, Alexander quit school at the age of twelve and began work as a messenger at the Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph Company, Pittsburgh. His grandfather strongly disapproved of this decision and hoped, as Elizabeth Alexander (Alexander's wife) later recalled, that "this hard work of tramping all over Pittsburgh would wear out [Alexander's] longing to fend for himself and he might return to school and discipline. But John loved the freedom and variety of his new life."[3] Colonel Edward Jay Allen, Alexander's employer and the vice-president on the Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph Company, first became aware of the talent of young Alexander when he was able to sketch, from memory, the likeness of a business caller who appeared during Allen's absence from his office and left without any indication of his name or business that had prompted the call. Allen recognized the caller from the sketch and encouraged Alexander to continue sketching through gifts of drawing materials. Upon learning the dismal circumstances of Alexander's youth, Allen went to speak with the boy's grandparents, who consented to his adoption of their grandson. Allen, of English descent, was a generous and supportive figure--at the time of Alexander's adoption, Allen had two girls and three boys, the youngest an infant--

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and had a veneration for achievement in the arts although he had very little direct experience with it.[4]

The lively Allen household was quite a change from the stern quotidian environment of Alexander's grandparents' home, and in it he thrived. In addressing the favorable conditions for art study in America in 1912 in comparison with the "negligible" conditions of the 1870s, Alexander ascribed his determination to become an artist to these early years in Pittsburgh. "Like all children, when I was a boy I was constantly asked this question put to me by well meaning friends of the family. 'What are you going to be, my boy, when you grow up?' And to my invariable reply, 'I want to be an artist,' came the instant and disgusted rejoinder, 'and starve in a garret.'"[5] Between odd jobs and high school studies, Alexander sketched incessantly, seeking inspiration in the contemporary illustrated press, including Harper's Weekly and The Graphic, admiring the style of Thomas Nast (1840-1902) in particular.[6] As his facility in drawing developed, so did his ambition to become an illustrator. Realizing that his only opportunity to work in his chosen field would be in New York, he diligently saved his money, and with an extra $50.00 that he borrowed from Allen, moved to New York in January 1875 at the age of eighteen.

With little money and no connections or introductions, Alexander spent his first three months in New York looking

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for work but finding little other than discouragement. The art editors at The Graphic, The Freelance, and Frank Leslie's saw promise in Alexander's sketchbook of drawings, but felt he was not qualified to work as an illustrator without prior training or formal study.[7] Alexander's spirit was surely dampened, as he expressed in a letter to Allen, "After going the rounds and failing, although I had not expected anything but failure, I could not but feel very blue - I took my sketch book and locked it up in my trunk, and have not had it out since."[8]

After over three months in a hotel and irregular meals, Alexander found a room in a boarding house at 137 MacDougal Street for $6.00 a week. His accommodations were less than grand, as Alexander recalled, "My room is about 7' x 4', and contains a bed, washstand, chair and trunk - The chair stands leaning against the wall, with two legs resting on the foot of the bed as there is not enough room for it on the floor."[9] But he was settled for the first time since moving to New York and began sketching with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. In early May, Charles Parsons, art director of Harper Brothers' Art Department, hired Alexander as an office boy for $3.00 a week and promised to consider his sketches for illustrations in the future. Alexander was quick to recognize the potential of his new position and he wrote to Allen, "It makes me feel as though I could do almost anything - to succeed - and if I once get the start I

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will succeed - You see if I don't."[10] Alexander's enthusiasm and Parsons's promise were not gratuitous as within three months, he was promoted to the art department at Harper Brothers and began working on drawings for Harper's Weekly and Harper's New Monthly Magazine. By August his salary had increased to $8.00 a week with the guarantee of $10.00 a week by October for one year, and $15.00 a week for the second year.[11]

The American illustrated press experienced dramatic and rapid growth in the 1870s, reaching its peak of popularity in the 1880s and 1890s. The art departments of such distinguished publishing houses as Harper Brothers and The Century Company were attracting experienced, highly qualified artists, some of whom had foreign training and exhibited at the National Academy of Design annual exhibitions. With increasingly sophisticated techniques and distinct personal styles, illustrators in the post-Civil War period drew attention to their work as equal to narrative, not merely illustrative of it.

It was largely under the direction of Charles Parsons (1821-1910) that the art department at Harper's grew from an adjunct to a vital department of the company, with a dozen or more artists on staff at any given time. In addition to having hired such distinguished illustrators as Thomas Nast and Winslow Homer (1836-1910), Parsons, an artist himself,

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was quick to recognize the skill of such young artists as Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911), Alexander, Frank Dumond (1865-1951), Arthur Burdett Frost (1851-1928), Granville Perkins (1830-?), Howard Pyle (1853-1911), and Charles Stanley Reinhart (1844-1896), all of whom facilitated the rapid advance in the art of pictorial illustration at Harper's in the 1870s.[12] The subsequent eminence of many of these artists attests in part to Parsons's foresight and timely role in the encouragement and stimulation of their careers.

Harper's Weekly and Harper's New Monthly Magazine were both distinguished by their copious illustrations although the two publications differed in overall tone and editorial direction. Harper's Weekly, subtitled "The Journal of Civilization," reported current events and stressed the news much as a newspaper would. At the same time, the inclusion of serial fiction and essays aligned Harper's Weekly with more general interest monthly magazines. With respect to Harper's Weekly's combination of pictures, politics, current events, essays, and fiction, Frank Luther Mott observed, Harper's Weekly was "much more than [a] newspaper, and [it] placed the emphasis on features of appeal which belonged more characteristically to a magazine than to a newspaper--namely pictures and belles-lettres."[13] Leaving the discussion of current events and politics to Harper's Weekly, Harper's New Monthly Magazine was designed for a

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wider audience and focused on general interest stories, serial fiction, travel literature, and biography, all accompanied by copious illustrations. Although some artists became directly linked with one of the two journals published by Harper Brothers--Thomas Nast's political drawings for Harper's Weekly in the 1870s is an example of this--most illustrators worked for both journals. Alexander's contributions to Harper's Weekly often depicted current events while his illustrations for Harper's New Monthly Magazine were of a more general nature.

Alexander's first illustrations appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine by January 1876. Indications that Alexander had drawings published earlier appeared in a letter from October 1875 where he complained, "I have several sketches coming out, but the conceptions are not mine - my name does not appear."[14] Alexander's subjects were typically figures in the landscape without any particular sense of drama or action. As articles were often illustrated with the works of several artists, Alexander's illustrations frequently appeared at the beginning of the story to establish its general context, while subsequent illustrations emphasized specific incidents or places.[15] Moreover, Alexander's illustrations often appeared alongside those of Charles Stanley Reinhart, who specialized in figures, and Granville Perkins, who specialized in land and seascapes, suggesting an artistic rapport between the three.

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Indeed, one of Alexander's first assignments for illustrations outside of New York was to document the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876 in the company of Perkins, Reinhart, and Ivan Pranischinkoff (?-1910).[16] The international art displays at the Centennial Exhibition must have made an impression on Alexander whose exposure to contemporary art was still quite limited. Alexander continued to travel for Harper's, including making a trip to his hometown to cover the disturbances during the violent Pittsburgh railroad strike in August 1877, the drawings of which appeared in Harper's Weekly.[17]

As Alexander's reputation and skill as an illustrator grew, so did his circle of friends and his interest in the contemporary art world around him. In a letter from January 1876, Alexander described his impressions of the watercolor exhibition at the National Academy of Design, disclosing his nascent inclination toward generalized figure painting:

> Johnson, the English artist, has two pictures; one is thought by Mr. Parsons and others to be the best in the collection. But while I admire it I would not care to paint just as it is painted. It is so finished that it makes one tired to look at it. But the other - how I would like to paint such a picture. It is very simple and tender. The subject is nothing but a beautiful young girl in meditation, but it is so fine. I almost fell in love with the girl - know I did with the picture.[18]

By March of 1876, Alexander was sharing a studio with fellow Harper's illustrator Charles Stanley Reinhart, contributing his share of the rent by acting as Reinhart's model.

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Alexander's friendship with Reinhart was a formative one as Reinhart, also from Pittsburgh, was a more experienced artist, having studied in Munich and Paris for two years. He encouraged Alexander to do the same.

In letters dating from shortly after his moving into Reinhart's studio, Alexander began to seriously consider the advantages of European training, vacillating between Paris and Munich. "I am beginning to change my mind about Munich," he wrote. "The French stand at the head of the world in Art, and the advantages to the student are therefore greater than in any other country. From what I can learn, with Mr. Reinhart's help, the schools in Paris are the best in the world."[19] In June of 1876, having completed just less than one year at the art department at Harper's, Alexander proposed an arrangement with Mr. Parsons that would guarantee Alexander employment in the art department after his return from one year of study abroad. However, as Parsons was unwilling to agree upon the terms of such an arrangement or to guarantee a salary increase upon return, Alexander decided to work for one more year in order to save enough money for a more extensive period of foreign training.

By March of 1877, Alexander had decided upon Paris and was anxious to arrive there before the annual Salon closed. "I would want to study at the Fine Arts School half of each day, and the other half with <u>some</u> artist. I can't decide

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which until I get over there and see the work of all the best - and this can only be seen at the Salon", he wrote to Allen.[20] Travelling with his childhood friend Abner Reinhart (1854-1926), the younger brother of Charles Stanley, Alexander sailed for Europe in August 1877 with $300.00 and the hope of future employment with Harper's yet with no formal guarantee.[21]

"London, I can hardly believe it" were Alexander's first words in a letter to the Allens after his arrival in Europe. With only three or four days in London before travelling to Paris, Alexander and Reinhart scoured the city from dawn to dusk, visiting the National Gallery and the South Kensington and British Museums. Arriving in Paris on September 1 or 2, Alexander and Reinhart immediately set out for the École des Beaux-Arts, only to find the school not in session and the Salon over. Alexander's palpable disappointment at the apparent disarray of the school was matched only by his prudish outrage with the style of contemporary painting he saw in Paris. He wrote:

> In all the time I was in Paris I did not see one picture that I really liked - but any amount that I did not like - Every place we went we inquired about the Beaux Arts - We were told by all that it had run down very much - that the professors paid very little attention to the students - and that the students did just as they pleased - Drank and smoked so that it was impossible to work - The professors do not attend sometimes for days - You know they get no pay - At least they are so reported - and they really give their name more than their presence - But what changed me more

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> than anything was the style of pictures that form the French School - and every student paints the same - I was really disgusted - I can't tell you by letter what some of the subjects were that I saw exposed in full view in the principle streets -but they were such as no person should look at - They would not be allowed in the U.S.. We stopped in Paris only four days but in that time we saw all we wanted to see and much more too - I was thoroughly tired of the city-.[22]

After a 26 hour trip at a cost of $18.00, Alexander and Reinhart arrived in Munich September 8, and Alexander assured the Allens, "I feel sure I can get along here if any place."[23]

Although Paris was the preeminent choice for American art students seeking foreign training in the post-Civil War period, Munich was second only to Paris in the 1870s as a magnet for aspiring American artists.[24] Munich, like many cities in Germany, flourished in the decade immediately following the Franco-Prussian war, as the German victory heightened national confidence and generated economic prosperity resulting in, among other things, increased revenue for art patronage. Moreover, many of the American students attracted to Munich were from German-American families in such midwestern cities as Cincinnati and Milwaukee.[25]

Unlike the diverse training available in Paris at the various ateliers within the École des Beaux-Arts and at the many independent academies, art education in Munich was far more unified as it was dominated by one institution, the

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Royal Academy. There, students were trained in a realistic style of painting with an emphasis on technique, based in large part on works of the old masters, particularly seventeenth-century Dutch, Flemish, and Spanish. Karl Von Piloty (1826-1886) was a prominent figure at the Royal Academy in the 1870s. His professorship began in 1856; in 1874 he was appointed director of the Academy. Piloty's academic style, informed by his Parisian master Jules-Hippolyte Paul Delaroche (1795-1849), and his orientation toward technical mastery dominated the direction of training at the Royal Academy during the period.

Contrary to Parisian training that centered on the study of the nude figure, instruction at the Royal Academy in Munich emphasized portraiture, particularly the "study head" as it was called, and historical scenes. Admission to the Royal Academy required the demonstration of a technical facility in drawing. Upon acceptance, the student first entered the Antique Class, where he drew from casts of antique sculpture.[26] Demonstration of a mastery of drawing technique allowed the student to proceed to the Life Class, where instruction centered on composition, figure drawing, and painting technique, particularly in portrait studies. Finally, the student advanced to the Painting Class, or "Master Class", where he worked with one professor at the Academy.[27] Although the length of instruction varied, the

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average period of study for Americans at the Royal Academy was one to three years.

Outside of the Royal Academy, the most pervasive influence on the development of art in Munich in the 1870s was the work of the young realist Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900). Leibl studied with Piloty at the Royal Academy in the 1860s and under his tutelage he developed a fluency in the old master tradition. However, Leibl turned to an emphatic and experimental realism in the late 1860s influenced, in part, by the works of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) and Edouard Manet (1832-1883). In paintings in the late 1860s and early 1870s, Leibl typically placed his figures against a dark, indefinite background, and with a highly restricted tonal palette, highlighted the essential features of the figure through dramatic lighting and strong chiaroscuro. Although Leibl left Munich in 1873, his fluent alla-prima painting technique--painting wet on wet--and sketch-like paintings defied the canons of academic method and finish and provided a vital aesthetic model for the dynamic balance of dramatic realism and bold technique that characterized much of the work of American artists in Munich in the 1870s.[28] As Michael Quick has documented, Leibl's influence on American artists was both direct and indirect. Duveneck had met Leibl in 1872 and associated with Wilhelm Trubner (1851-1917) from 1870-71, during which time they were both enrolled in Wilhelm Diez's (1839-1907) class at the Royal

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Academy. William Merritt Chase purchased two small works by Leibl while in Munich. Moreover, Leibl's works were admired and emulated by many of the art students with whom Americans associated at the Royal Academy, both before and after Leibl's departure from Munich in 1873.[29]

Alexander settled quickly into Munich. The day after his arrival, he found a room to share with Reinhart at a cost of $2.50 a month each, plus 50 cents a day for three meals. Alexander wrote to the Allens, "Have been to see the pictures of Munich artists and am more than pleased - I like the city and the people - and am sure there is not another city in the world that would in every way suit me as Munich does."[30] In preparation for his formal studies at the Royal Academy, Alexander began sketching casts of antique sculpture that were available for study at the Academy before classes began in October. He described the scene in detail:

> In the Antique School are some of the finest casts I have ever seen - We have five rooms full of casts - nearly all much larger than life - none smaller - and among these wherever they can find room are the students - working away. . . . All stand at their work as it is impossible to sit and make a large drawing - The first day (Monday) I stood from 8 a.m. to nearly 6 p.m. with the exception of a half of an hour for dinner - and wasn't I tired - I could hardly walk home.[31]

In the evenings, Alexander would get together with other artists and share the cost of a model, so as to have a drawing from life to submit for admission to the Royal Academy.

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On October 15, 1877, Alexander began his training at the Royal Academy in the Antique Class with Gyula Benczur (1844-1920), "the best teacher in the Academy" Alexander wrote. Benczur, a Hungarian, had begun his studies at the Royal Academy in Munich in the late 1860s and excelled in painting historical tableaux in the manner of his master Karl von Piloty. Benczur was appointed professor of drawing at the Royal Academy in 1876, a position he maintained until 1883. At a cost of $10.00 a month, the typical work week for a student in the Antique Class included sketching from casts of antique sculpture from 8 to 12 and 1 to 5 in the winter, from 7 to 12 and 1 to 6 in the summer, with evening classes from 7 to 9, and regular weekly lectures on anatomy, the history of art, and perspective. Benczur was present in the class every other day to correct the drawings and to demonstrate various techniques.

Alexander's facility for drawing improved dramatically and rapidly, gaining the approval of Benczur. By late November, he began attending the Life Class in the evenings from 5 to 7. Although not officially enrolled in the class, Alexander and other students who excelled in the Antique Class were allowed to attend, as space permitted, and to draw from the model alongside more advanced students. Alexander described the Life Class:

> It is different from the work during the day as we have seats - and all is as quiet as a public school - The seats are numbered and each person is given a number which is on a list outside - so there is no confusion -

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> each knows his number and takes his seat. When the clock strikes five - the model steps out and takes his place at the table, in some certain position - decided upon by the Prof - before hand - which he holds for one hour - Then there is a rest for fifteen minutes and then back to work again until seven.[32]

In addition to being an honor to be permitted to participate in the evening class, it often facilitated official admittance to the Life Class.

After one and a half terms in Benczur's Antique Class, Alexander was admitted to the Life Class in April 1878, having passed the drawing exam with the highest honors. Even before official admittance to the class, however, he began formulating his plans for entering a Painting Class after one term in the Life Class. Alexander described the increasing difficulty of being admitted to a Painting Class as the Academy swelled with students:

> I will have great difficulty in getting into a painting class as they are so full, and the painters do not change as the "Antiques" do. If Benczoir [sic] does not have a painting class when I have been one term in the life class, I think I will go with Deitz [sic], who is one of the finest painters in the world. But it will be even more difficult to get with him than any other on account of his reputation. Some students have been waiting three or four terms, which I won't do.[33]

Diez's popularity as a teacher at the Royal Academy was due in part to his teaching style which encouraged experimentation. As Quick has pointed out, Diez had limited experience as a painter when he was appointed to the position of painting instructor in 1870. "Perhaps because he felt he was still a student of painting himself, Diez

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seems to have given free rein to a process of mutual teaching through group experimentation common among groups of more advanced students such as the Leibl circle."[34] Moreover, Duveneck's presence in Diez's classes in the early 1870s assured Diez's popularity among American art students. Alexander considered studying with other artists, including Wilhelm von Lindenschmitt (1829-1895) and Alexander von Wagner (1838-1919). "I don't think it really makes much difference who is the Prof - if one wants to learn he can - and the way to learn is with the eyes and not the ears."[35] However, he concluded his studies at the Royal Academy after one term in the Life Class. Alexander's last official association with the Academy was in July 1878, when he received a bronze medal in a competition of students in Benczur's Antique Class.[36]

Frank Duveneck's (1848-1919) presence in Munich from 1875 to 1879 had a considerable impact on the work of Americans studying in Munich in the second half of the 1870s. Duveneck entered the Royal Academy in Munich in 1870, studying with Wilhelm Diez, and quickly adopted a realistic and forceful manner of painting that typified and would be identified as the "Munich style." Derived in part from Leibl's painterly sketch-like style and Franz Hals's masterful balancing of realism and bold technique, this so-called "Munich style" was characterized by vigorous brushwork, brilliant areas of light brushed fluently into a

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shadowy ground, and a general movement toward experimentation and formal freedom. Although Duveneck was one of the rising stars in Diez's class, he left Munich in 1873, and began his long teaching career at the Ohio Mechanics Institute School of Design in Cincinnati. His students included Robert Blum (1857-1903), Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), Joseph DeCamp (1858-1923), and John Twachtman (1852-1902), among others. After a highly successful exhibition of five of his paintings at the Boston Arts Club in the summer of 1875, Duveneck returned to Munich in late August of that year, accompanied by Twachtman and Henry Farny (1847-1916).

At the height of his youthful powers upon his return in 1875 and with the glow of critical success, Duveneck quickly assumed the role of mentor among the growing circle of American art students in Munich.[37] Many Americans flocked to Duveneck for advice and training, and with the increasing difficulty of gaining admission to the Painting Class at the Royal Academy, Duveneck began a rather loosely formed school in the fall 1878, held in Munich from October to May and in Polling, a small village south of Munich, in the summer.

Polling became an important center for American art students in the late 1870s. Its location in the Bavarian countryside, within easy reach of Munich, made it an ideal location for students and artists seeking a respite from the rigors of academic training and the hectic pace of city

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life. Duveneck first travelled to Polling in 1872; he returned to the Bavarian village again in the summer of 1875 and 1876.[38] By 1878, a virtual American artists' colony was established there, with most artists renting studios, at a very reasonable cost, in the abandoned seventeenth-century Holy Cross Monastery.

The presence of J. Frank Currier (1843-1909) had a decisive influence on American artists, particularly in Polling, in the late 1870s. Currier was part of the first wave of American artists to go to Munich in the early 1870s, along with William Merritt Chase (1849-1916), Frank Duveneck, and Walter Shirlaw (1838-1909). Although the combined influence of Franz Hals and Wilhelm Leibl was conspicuous in Currier's work in the early and mid-1870s, as it was with other Americans who studied in Munich at this time, his later work was distinguished by an intensity of expression that stood apart from the "Munich look." Moreover, Currier was an exponent of the so-called "cult of unfinish," which became a vital anti-academic aesthetic in the 1870s and 1880s. Currier established permanent residence in Polling and remained an important link for American artists in Germany throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.[39] As William Gerdts has pointed out, Currier did not formally teach American students at Polling but provided informal advice and participated in sketching trips. Alexander met Currier during his first summer in

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Polling in 1878 and reported having taken sketching trip with Currier and having drawn his portrait.[40]

Alexander's first trip to Polling was in May of 1878, when he planned to stay two or three days to see how the artists lived and worked there. By June 7, he listed his address as Haus 38, Polling, Bavaria, having given up his room in Munich. He assured the Allens, "I will never regret the change I have made. Have so many more chances to learn than in the Academy - Am learning the practical part -."[41] Throughout the summer, Alexander worked assiduously painting portrait heads--"at least one head everyday - sometimes three"--and water color sketches from nature. By October 1878, he had his own studio in Polling for $2.00 a month, with total monthly expenses at $25.00 including rent, food, model fees, and painting supplies.

Alexander remained in Polling through September 1879, after deciding not to return to formal studies at the Royal Academy. The reasons for this decision are unclear, although it is likely that the stimulating environment and the esprit de corps among fellow Americans in Polling appealed to Alexander. Moreover, the freedom from the demands of rigorous instruction at the Royal Academy allowed him to concentrate on his developing interest in portraiture. He wrote in a letter home, "Everything seems to point to my being a portrait painter, and truly I know of nothing I would like better than to be able to paint a

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first-class portrait, but first-class or none at all. . . . As it is now I can get a better likeness than any of the artists here - And all the boys who come down to visit us come to me for a portrait sketch."[42] His letters are filled with references to life-size portraits and portrait heads he drew of his artist colleagues in charcoal and in color. Alexander's concentration of portraiture during his tenure in Polling was somewhat unusual as most of the work being done by American art students in Polling was outdoor landscape painting. While no formal landscape paintings have been discovered from this period, Alexander's letters refer to sketching trips in the countryside. Moreover, his exposure to advanced techniques in outdoor landscape painting may have led him to his first formal essays in landscape painting in the early 1880s.[43]

Study Head of Munich Peasant (fig. 2) was painted during this period in Polling--May 1878 through September 1879--and reveals Alexander's fluency with the "Munich style" in the manner of Duveneck.[44] The portrait head of a young girl, her face turned in profile, is conceived largely in terms of lights and darks, as the head emerges from a shadowy, indefinite background with bright light falling principally on the face and the ruffles at the collar of the blouse. The conspicuous brushwork and vigorous paint handling attest to Alexander's facility with the alla prima technique and assert the importance of technical display,

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while the details of the face and the eloquent passage of the sheer black cap over the girl's ear provide an element of forceful realism. Based on the aesthetic strategies of Duveneck, Currier, and Leibl, study heads such as this one were not studies for larger works or merely technical exercises but were finished paintings. Although Alexander would ultimately abandon the vigorous brushwork and the tenebrous palette that distinguish this work in favor of a more decorative treatment of the figure and thinner paint handling, his commitment to portraiture as a vehicle for technical display endured.

Alexander and Duveneck had established a friendship by the summer of 1879; it was probably during this period that Duveneck painted Alexander's portrait (Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati). Other Americans in the group in Polling during this summer--the so-called "Duveneck boys"--included Charles Abel Corwin (1857-?), Joseph DeCamp, Frederick W. Freer (1849-1930), Charles Lang (1860-1934), and Ross Turner (1847-1915).[45] In the fall of 1879, Duveneck invited Alexander to travel with him to Florence and assist him in teaching his classes of ladies as well as of the "boys" from Polling and Munich. On October 5, Duveneck and Alexander went to Florence to set up the school before the arrival of the others later in the month. Alexander described the school and the opportunities available to him in detail:

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> Have been at work all week - painting for the ladies in their school - The ladies have a very fine studio and have fixed it up as only ladies can - and they want me to work there altogether - not to go with the boys - but Duveneck has made it better for me - There will be when the boys all get here three studios - and I am to go around to the different ones and paint in the ones I like best - . . . but, and this is the secret, Duveneck thinks the school will get too large for one man to attend - and he will need an assistant - Do you see - It may not be and if it does it may not be for sometime yet from the number of letters that are coming in it looks as if another studio would have to be taken in a month or so - Students are coming in not only from Munich but from Paris and America and Duveneck will want time to paint for himself - so there is a chance for me as Duveneck still keeps me at the head of all-.[46]

Throughout the winter and spring of 1879-80, Alexander continued to assist Duveneck in teaching the ladies' classes, met many American artists and writers including Henry James (1843-1916), and resumed his studies in portraiture.

Alexander may have had a studio in the same building as Duveneck's, where artists met regularly for informal gatherings and exhibitions. Indeed, Alexander's first exhibition of sorts was held in Duveneck's studio in March 1880. He recalled, "Yesterday I had my portrait of [Mead] on exhibit and you should have seen the crowd - the show took place in Duveneck's studio which he was so kind as to allow me to share - and there were so many people that I could hardly move around."[47] In April 1880, Duveneck took most of his class to Venice for the summer. Alexander followed in June as he had to close up the school in

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Florence. He noted, "I would have gone with the other boys to Venice had it not been for my pupils - several want to go to Venice with me to continue their studies there with me but I can't lose time there."[48] With a summer free from teaching obligations, Alexander planned to resume his own studies without interruptions.

The presence of James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) in Venice in the summer of 1880 was to have a significant impact on the work of the group of young American artists who travelled with Duveneck that summer. Whistler was in Venice from September 1879 through November 1880, having received a commission from the Fine Arts Society, London, to do a series of etchings.[49] The timing of the commission was auspicious as Whistler was left financially ruined after his Pyrrhic victory in the sensational Whistler-Ruskin trial of 1877-78. In addition to etchings, Whistler made numerous pastels of Venice, often using brown paper with black pastel for outline of forms and high key colors. A result of the contact of American students with Whistler was that many brought home with them an interest in the pastel medium, which experienced a significant rise of popularity in the 1880s. Moreover, Whistler's use of brilliant colors and experimentation with the effects of bright light were a provocative alternative to the tenebrous Munich manner most practiced at this time.[50]

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Alexander's initial acquaintance with Whistler seems to have had little direct impact on his work, although the details of their meeting reveal the beginning of a personal friendship which they maintained until Whistler's death in 1903. Elizabeth Alexander recalled:

> He [Alexander] met Whistler on a very hot day. John was working in one of the little back canals, very hard at work at what he was doing. Somebody came up to him and put his hand on his shoulder and looked over his shoulder, and began talking to him about his work and it was Whistler. He sat down and practically gave him a criticism of what he was doing. From that time on they were always friends, and I think John had the most unique experience of being the only person he [Whistler] never quarreled with.[51]

It was not until Alexander returned to New York in the early 1880s and became familiar with Whistler's paintings that the impact of the elder artist's style could be seen in Alexander's work.

Alexander returned to Florence in October 1880 and resumed teaching at Duveneck's school, although he began to grow weary of the demanding schedule. Alexander had been in Europe for over three years and, having completed his formal studies, was anxious to return to the United States and launch his new career as a portraitist with the pedigree of foreign training. He later recalled, "At the end of two winters, I suddenly realized that if I stayed another winter in Florence, I would be nothing but a teacher of a very successful class of amateurs. That was not what I wanted to be so I dismissed my class, packed up and came back to New

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York with about the amount of money I had left with."[52] On March 21, 1881, Alexander sailed for the United States.

The years 1875 to 1881 were formative in Alexander's career and established the methodological and aesthetic foundation upon which his decorative style would evolve in the 1880s. Alexander's early experiences as an illustrator introduced him to a rapid, sketchy pictorial style that informed his work to some degree for the rest of his career. Moreover, illustration provided an income for Alexander throughout the 1880s and thus was an important, if not central, aspect of his career. Alexander's brief academic training in Munich at the Royal Academy, followed by more extensive exposure to advanced art techniques and ideas at the side of Duveneck and others in Polling, provided him with a basic artistic armature and a fluency with pictorial technique. Alexander quickly abandoned the tenebrous, painterly Munich style in the 1880s, as did many of his colleagues from Munich. However, a restricted tonal palette, an enduring commitment to portraiture, and a belief in the primacy of technique, were the principal results of his foreign training experience that would inform his artistic practice for the rest of his career.[53] Finally, his contact with Whistler in Venice initiated what would be a lifelong friendship and a professional association with the artist. More important, it marked the beginning of

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Alexander's certain awareness of Whistler's provocative imagery, which would become a compelling influence on the evolution of Alexander's decorative style.

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ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 1

1. The John White Alexander Papers, microfilm reels 1727-1731, 1807, housed at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, are the richest primary source for biographical information on Alexander. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical data are drawn from this source. If a frame number appears in brackets in the citation, it was obscured in the filming of the document and therefore indecipherable. Hereafter, all references to the John White Alexander Papers will appear as: JWA/AAA, followed by reel and frame numbers.

2. Letter to E. E. Phelps dated January 16, 1876, JWA/AAA reel 1727, frame 508. The punctuation and grammar in Alexander's extensive correspondence are distinctly his own and evoke, one suspects, his manner of speaking in written form. In the interest in preserving the authenticity and tone of the documents, grammar and spelling have been retained in their original form. The only changes are slight alterations in punctuation where these seemed necessary for clarity.

3. Many quotations are taken from two interviews of Elizabeth Alexander by Mr. DeWitt M. Lockman, January 24 and February 1, 1928. JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frames []-220: hereafter referred to as Lockman interview followed by frame number.

4. Virtually no documentation on Colonel Allen nor the adoption proceedings has been discovered. Elizabeth Alexander, however, described in detail her husband's fond memories of Allen and referred to a privately published book of poems by Allen that remained in Alexander's library until his death. Moreover, the extensive correspondence from Alexander to Allen--over 100 letters are extant--attest to their amiability.

5. This quotation is from a working version of an article by Alexander that appeared as "The Art Outlook," Art and Progress 3, no. 7 (May 1912): 572-80, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 1133.

6. Alexander later painted a portrait of Thomas Nast in March 1887.

7. In April 1875, Alexander met the portrait painter Francis Bicknell Carpenter (1830-1900), who tried to get Alexander admitted to the National Academy of Design School.

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Although Alexander submitted several drawings and Carpenter assured him that "[Alexander] had four times more talent than Carpenter did at his age," no decision was reached and the matter appeared to have been dropped. Letters to Allen dated March 29 and April 17, 1875, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frames 323-94. Hereafter all letters are to Allen unless otherwise noted.

8. Letter dated March 2, 1875, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 304.

9. Letter dated March 3, 1875, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 309.

10. Letter dated May 3, 1875, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 397.

11. Letter to E. E. Phelps dated August 22, 1875, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 462.

12. For a history of the role of illustration at Harper's Magazine, see H. M. Alden, "Fifty Years of Harper's Magazine," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 100, no. 600 (May 1900): 947-62. For a discussion of the role of Charles Parsons and the development of American illustration within an international context, see Joseph Pennell, Modern Illustration (1895; rpt., London: George Bell & Sons, 1898), pp. 113-30. For more general information on the development of the American illustrated press, see Frank Luther Mott, The History of American Magazines, 1741 - 1930 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957); vol. II, pp. 383-405, and vol. III, pp. 457-80. For a brief reference to Parsons's work at Harper's, see Charles Parsons: Krakatoa (Montclair: Montclair Art Museum, 1991), n. pag.

13. Mott, American Magazines, vol. II, pp. 43-44. For general information on Harper's Weekly and Harper's New Monthly Magazine, see respectively idem, pp. 43-45 and 469-87; 29-30 and 383-405.

14. Letter dated October 14, 1875, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 525. It is difficult to trace the exact date of Alexander's first published illustration as references to specific issues in the Alexander Papers are oblique. Moreover, during the 1870s illustrations often appeared without signatures, suggesting that they were the work of more than one artist.

15. See, for example, Alexander's illustration "Navajos" in William H. Rideing, "A Trial in the Far Southwest," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 53, no. 313 (June 1876): 15. Alexander's drawing of two indians appears on

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the first page of the story, while detailed landscapes by Granville Perkins and Charles Motte illustrate the remainder of the article.

16. In a letter dated May 28, 1876, Alexander explained that many illustrations were the result of a collaborative effort: Alexander and Reinhart drew the figures; Perkins drew the landscape; and other staff artists drew the architectural details, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 648.

17. Harper's Weekly 21 (August 11, 1877): 624-5, 628-9. Alexander's illustrations for Harper's Weekly were the subject of an exhibition in 1973. See Butler Institute of American Art, John White Alexander in Harper's Weekly, 1877 - 1887 (Youngstown: Butler Institute of American Art, 1973), essay by Mary Anne Goley.

18. Letter dated January 21, 1876, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 549. The artist Alexander referred to is probably Thomas Johnson, the English watercolorist and portraitist who worked in New York in the 1870s through the 1890s.

19. Letter dated March 26, 1876, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 607.

20. Letter dated March 25, 1877, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 753.

21. Although most contemporary sources date Alexander's departure for Europe in June 1877, as Elizabeth Alexander indicated in Lockman interview, this date is highly improbable. The fact that Alexander illustrated the Pittsburgh railroad strike in early August, as well as the date August 28 of Alexander's first letter from Europe, lead the author to believe that Alexander sailed in August 1877. Moreover, in a letter dated April 8, 1877, Alexander stated that he would be in Pittsburgh for at least three months before sailing to Europe, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frame 758

22. Letter dated September 9, 1877 from Munich, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frames 780-94.

23. Ibid., frame 794.

24. Although American artists studied in Munich before and after the 1870s--Toby Rosenthal (1848/9-1917) studied there from 1861 to 1866; William M. Harnett (1848-1892) studied there from 1881 to 1884--Munich enjoyed its greatest popularity among American art students in the 1870s. The first wave of American artists came to Munich between 1870 and 1873 and included William M. Chase, J. Frank Currier, Frank Duveneck, Louis Moeller, and Walter Shirlaw, among

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others. A second wave of American artists followed in 1875 and after including Alexander, Robert Blum, Charles Abel Corwin, Charles M. Lang, Carl Marr (1858-1936), Abner Reinhart, John Twachtman, and Charles F. Ulrich (1858-1908), among others.

25. Michael Quick's studies on the impact of Munich training on American artists in the 1870s have set the standard for scholarship in this area. In his 1978 essay, Quick expands upon the important yet far from exclusive influence of Wilhelm Leibl on the direction of Munich painting, concentrating particularly on the Royal Academy of Munich, where virtually all American artists studied. In his 1987 essay, he examines in greater detail the role of Frank Duveneck as a mentor and teacher of American pupils in Munich, Polling, and later in Florence. See respectively Michael Quick, "Munich and American Realism," in Munich and American Realism (Sacramento: E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1978), pp. 21-36; and idem, An American Painter Abroad: Frank Duveneck's European Years (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1987), pp. 11-109.

26. As with the École des Beaux-Arts, there were no women students admitted to the Royal Academy at this time, although the government opened a separate school of women in 1872. The author thanks Dr. Gerdts for this information. See Charlotte J. Weeks, "Lady Art Students in Munich," Magazine of Art 4 (1881): 343-47.

27. See Quick, Munich and American Realism, p.23. The terminology Quick uses to describe the tripartite division of instruction at the Royal Academy in Munich differs slightly from the author's, as her material is drawn directly from Alexander's correspondence, where he discussed instruction at the Royal Academy in detail. See JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 51-57.

28. Quick, Munich and American Realism, p. 21. Quick identifies the balance of realism and technique as the hallmark of Munich-trained artists on the whole and discusses three distinct trends in the development of realism in Munich from 1870 to 1885, during which time most Americans sought training there. The first phase, 1870-73, of experimental painting influenced by the bravura style of Franz Hals (1580-1666), was followed by the second phase, 1875-78, of bolder realism based on the example of seventeenth-century Spanish baroque masters Velázquez (1599-1660) and Ribera (1588-1656). The third phase, 1879-85, was distinguished by smaller scale works and a cooler, less dramatic realism based on the example of seventeenth-century Dutch little masters as well as of German renaissance artist Holbein (1497-1543). Although the influence, if indirect,

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of Leibl's dramatic and experimental realism continued throughout the 1870s, by 1875 Leibl was following an entirely different stylistic path. See idem, pp. 29-32. A century earlier, S. G. W. Benjamin identified bravura technique and a greater breadth in the treatment of details as leading characteristics of the new German school. See S. G. W. Benjamin, "Contemporary Art in Germany," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 55, no. 325 (July 1877): 1-22. For a discussion of Leibl and the influence of his technique, see Eberhard Ruhmer, "Wilhelm Leibl and His Circle," in Munich and American Realism, pp. 9-17.

29. Quick, Munich and American Realism, p. 21.

30. Letter to Willie Allen dated September 17, 1877, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frames 801-02.

31. Letter to Mrs. Allen dated September 21, 1877, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frames 848-49.

32. Letter to Mrs. Allen dated November 11, 1877, JWA/AAA, reel 1727, frames 922-23.

33. Letter dated March 24, 1878, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 56-58.

34. Quick, Munich and American Realism, p. 25.

35. Letter dated March 24, 1878, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 57. Alexander's reference to his brief period in the life class does not indicate whom he studied with. See JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 104-06.

36. The precise circumstances of Alexander's competition for and receipt of the bronze medal at the Royal Academy of Munich are difficult to trace. In a letter dated September 8, 1878, Alexander referred to having taken the "highest prize offered in the Antiques Department," after his first term with Benczur, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 161. Elizabeth Alexander suggested that Alexander was asked by Benczur to submit a drawing for competition with other students, who protested as Alexander had only been in the Antique Class for three months in Lockman interview, frame []. The medal is in the collection of the Alexander Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington Center.

37. See Quick, An American Painter Abroad, pp. 16-37. Quick states that in 1873 there were 26 American students at the Royal Academy. By 1878, the number had increased to 42, not counting those outside of the Academy.

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38. Quick, An American Painter Abroad, p. 46. The author thanks Dr. Gerdts for his clarification of the dates of Duveneck's travels to Polling.

39. The standard study on Currier remains Nelson C. White, The Life of J. Frank Currier (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1936).

40. William H. Gerdts traces the development of outdoor landscape training in American art to Munich and Polling in the 1870s. He notes:

> But the Munich contingent of American art students seems to have been in the vanguard of the outdoor teaching movement. Perhaps the painterly methodology that was avant-garde in Munich during the 1870s, practiced by Wilhelm Leibl and his circle and was adopted by some of the Americans who arrived there in the early 1870s, men such as Frank Duveneck, William Merritt Chase and others, was a natural technique to adopt and transmit in outdoor summer work, as opposed to the careful academic instruction of French ateliers or even of the Munich Royal Academy itself.

See idem, "The Teaching of Painting Out-of-Doors in America in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Norton Gallery of Art, In Nature's Ways: American Landscape Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century (West Palm Beach: Norton Gallery of Art, 1987), p. 25. Alexander's references to Currier appear in two letters: June 30 and July 19, 1878, JWA/AAA, reel 1728. frames 123 and 132.

41. Letter dated June 30, 1878, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 122. Alexander first mentioned Polling in a letter dated April 27, 1878, where he described Reinhart's vacation in the village, "Ab. is back again . . . and the little town where he was is just full of artists, who have studios and work there all year around - A gay, jolly and easy going set - Music in the evenings and work during the day," JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 76.

42. Letter dated October 27, 1878, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 195-97.

43. See JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 123. Alexander exhibited two landscapes at the National Academy of Design's autumn exhibition in 1882, catalogue numbers 290 and 440. See National Academy of Design, Catalogue of the Special Autumn Exhibition (New York: National Academy of Design, 1882), pp. 13, 20, 26.

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44. This painting is to be included in a forthcoming catalogue of the permanent collection of the Taft Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio, with a catalogue entry by Diane Strazdis.

45. Elizabeth Alexander referred to the "Polling Academy" with Currier as the president, Duveneck as the treasurer, and M. Woolf as the secretary in Lockman interview, frame []. Quick refers to a drawing by Alexander entitled The American Club, Polling, Summer 1879 (private collection), in An American Painter Abroad, p. 99, note 84. For a contemporary account of the American Academy in Polling, see "American Art Club in Munich," Art Amateur 11, no. 4 (September 1884): 74-76.

46. Letter to Mrs. Allen dated October 19, 1879 from Florence, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 266-7. For further information on Duveneck's classes in Florence in 1879 and 1880, see Quick, An American Painter Abroad, pp. 48-50.

47. Although no other references to this exhibition have been found, the letter includes a sketch of what may have been the portrait which he exhibited. Letter dated March 4, 1880, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 276. Elizabeth Alexander suggested that Alexander may have had his studio in this building, Lockman interview, frame 149. Mead may refer to Larkin Mead (1835-1920), the well-known American expatriate sculptor who worked in Florence from 1862 until his death in 1910.

48. Letter dated March 4, 1880, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 278.

49. In December 1880, 12 "Etchings of Venice" as well as 53 pastels by Whistler were exhibited at the Fine Arts Society, London; in January 1881, 53 of Whistler's pastels of Venice were exhibited in the same location. For information on Whistler and Venice, see Théodore Duret, "Artistes Anglais: James Whistler," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 23 (April 1881): 365-69; Otto Bacher, With Whistler in Venice (New York: The Century Company, 1908); and Robert Getscher, "Whistler and Venice" (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1970). The general bibliography on Whistler is extensive, however, a sampling of valuable sources would include: Denys Sutton, Nocturne: The Art of James McNeill Whistler (Philadelphia and New York, 1964); Frederick W. Sweet, James McNeill Whistler (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1968); Columbia University Department of Art History and Philadelphia Museum of Art, From Realism to Symbolism: Whistler and His World (New York and Philadelphia, 1971); Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret MacDonald, Robin Spencer, and Hamish Miles, The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler (New Haven and London, 1980); David

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Park Curry, James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1984); and Robert H. Getscher and Paul G. Marks, James McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent. Two Annotated Bibliographies (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986).

50. See Glasgow University, Whistler in Venice: Etchings, Drypoints and Pastels (Glasgow: Glasgow University, 1971). For a discussion of the impact of Whistler on many future American impressionists and the direction taken by impressionism in the United States, see William H. Gerdts, "The Role of Whistler and the Impact of Pastel," in American Impressionism (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1980), pp. 33-5. See also Dianne H. Pilgrim, "The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth-Century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel," American Art Journal 10, no. 2 (November 1978): 43-62.

51. Lockman interview, frame 148.

52. Alexander's recollection is quoted by Elizabeth Alexander, Lockman interview, frame 150.

53. As Quick suggests, the Munich style of the 1870s did not become an international style or even the New York style of the 1880s. With the departure of Duveneck and the "boys" to Florence and Venice in the late 1870s, the momentum of the American colony in Polling diminished rapidly. Moreover, in response to the greater interest in the effects of light and a higher-key palette that dominated aesthetic activity internationally in the 1880s, most Munich-trained artists abandoned the dark Munich palette, many of them taking additional training in Paris in the 1880s. Works by Chase and Duveneck in the 1880s are two examples of this shift. See Quick, Munich and American Realism, pp. 35-36.

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CHAPTER 2

THE 1880S
ILLUSTRATION AND PORTRAITURE
DEVELOPMENT OF DECORATIVE STYLE

If the quest for foreign training animated much of American art in the 1870s and in considerable ways determined its future course, the pursuit of aesthetic unity was a dominant direction of American art in the 1880s. In the post-Civil War period, American art experienced fundamental changes brought about by, among other things, academically-trained artists who returned from periods of study in Europe with new styles and a familiarity with both the great art of the past and internationally current trends. This foreign training provided American artists with professional attitudes about the making of art as well as a fluency in technique. The growing self-consciousness about artistic values and practices, and the increased attention to art-making, in contrast with antebellum concern with native subject matter and narrative, informed the work of many foreign-trained artists who shifted the direction of American art from naturalism to aestheticism.[1]

By 1880, American art's realignment with international art ideals and practices led critic and champion of the new generation of foreign trained artists William Cary Brownell (1851-1928) to declare confidently, "We are beginning to paint as other people paint." In a series of articles on

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the "younger painters of America," Brownell discussed the birth of a new American school of painting led by young artists who, through exposure to foreign training and internationally current art practices, released American art from the bonds of accurate imitation of natural forms and championed instead art for art's sake. Brownell identified the strength of technique and the genuine impulse toward what he called "picture-making" as the most striking and distinctive aspects of these young artists' work and said, "Almost without exception, nature is to them a material rather than a model; they lean toward feeling rather than toward logic; toward beauty, or at least artistic impressiveness rather than toward literalness, toward illusion rather than toward representation."[2]

Critical discussion of new trends in American art, particularly its internationalism and cosmopolitanism, characterized much of the writing in the 1880s. For example, three lavishly illustrated portfolios were published in the second half of the 1880s--Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer (1851-1934), Book of American Figure Painters, 1886; Alfred Trumble (1844-1897), Representative Works of Contemporary American Artists, c.1887; and George William Sheldon (1843-1914), Recent Ideals in American Art, c.1890--which championed the cause of contemporary American art and documented the cosmopolitan quality of late nineteenth-century American art, holding up foreign-trained

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artists as the ideal.[3] American art's shift toward cosmopolitanism and international standards in the late nineteenth century is succinctly addressed by Mariana Van Rensselaer:

> Thirty years ago there was scarcely an American artist who could have been fairly judged without constant reference to the fact of his nationality. Our art was then to a great extent an isolated development, with rather arbitrary standards of its own. We were proud of our painters and of the peculiar sort of success they had achieved; but in estimating their ability we appealed to little beyond home competition and home approval. Of late years, however, our art has grown to maturer stature, and is now amenable to the severest tests of merit. A whole generation of young American painters believe in the necessity of scientific training, and appeal to European criticism and to cosmopolitan standards of success.[4]

In fact, American artists increasingly exhibited works at the annual Paris Salon throughout the decade, thereby competing in an international arena and submitting their works to what was considered the highest standard of judgment.

The shift toward cosmopolitanism in American art was consistent with and indeed paralleled changing tastes in American art patronage. The overwhelming preference among American patrons in the post-Civil War period for contemporary European painting rather than native works is well documented in Earl Shinn's Art Treasures in America, published in three volumes between 1879 and 1882. Shinn's lavishly illustrated volumes reveal a particular preference among American patrons for French Barbizon and academic

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painting. Significantly, not a single American work of art was reproduced. To compete for patronage with foreign artists, American artists sought training abroad and emulated internationally current styles.[5]

The high water mark of American art's internationalism and the American expatriate movement was at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle: Americans were the most numerous of the foreign exhibitors; of the 190 American artists who exhibited, three-quarters of them had been trained in France. Moreover, their styles were largely indistinguishable from those of their foreign masters and contemporaries.[6] In reviewing the American section at the Exposition, critic Theodore Child (1846-1892) declared with confidence:

> At the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889 there is no exaggeration in saying that the American Fine Art section was one of the strongest and most interesting of all the foreign departments. . . . The important fact to be noted is that in 1889 America boasts an élite of artists whose names are cited in company with the most illustrious, and that men like Whistler, E. A. Abbey, W. T. Dannat, and John S. Sargent can hold their own brilliantly in a palace of art where the exhibitors, besides the great Frenchmen, are masters of the eminence of Munkacsy, Adolph Menzel . . . and Alfred Stephens.[7]

The origins of aestheticism as practiced by American artists in the 1880s, can be traced to sources other than foreign training and can be considered as part of a larger trend in both American and European art away from naturalism. A new concern with formal values and decorative

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pictorial design, and the assertion of art's independence from nature and ultimate superiority to it, can be linked to the aesthetic movement and its roots in Pre-Raphaelite painting at mid-century. The love of color for its own sake and the accumulation of details that caused two-dimensional treatment of form distinguished Pre-Raphaelite painting and challenged academic practice as supported by the Royal Academy. Although the late Victorians of the 1860s--Lord Leighton (1830-1898), Frederick Watts (1817-1904) and others--would reject Pre-Raphaelite concern with didactic content and photographic detail and return to universals based on the example of both Michelangelo (1475-1564) and 5th century B.C. Greek sculpture, their inclination toward two-dimensional treatment of form bore the imprint of their Pre-Raphaelite predecessors. Albert Moore's (1841-1892) quasi-abstract figural genre of the mid-1860s, which featured large scale female figures in shallow pictorial space, deflated narrative content and historical context and was animated almost entirely by a decorative impulse. Japanese prints were another essential component in the origins of aestheticism as they provided a stylistic and decorative vocabulary that was antithetical to western academic standards, particularly in their emphasis on flat, abstract patterning and two-dimensional treatment of form.[8]

The impact of Whistler on American art's profoundly shifting aesthetics in the 1880s cannot be overestimated, as

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he precociously championed art for art's sake with an unequalled fervor and single-mindedness. In the early 1860s, Whistler met Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), whose decorative and evocative portraits of women surrounded by exotic accoutrements helped break Whistler of his naturalistic style influenced by Courbet. Symphony in White, No. I: The White Girl (NGA), painted in 1862 and exhibited at the Salon des Réfuses in Paris the following year, introduced a series of figure paintings by Whistler that emphasized the decorative rather than the narrative. The inclusion of oriental accessories and props in the works from 1864, such as Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine (FGA) and Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks (PMA), reflected Whistler's early response to Japanese prints. Unquestionably, his contact with Albert Moore in the mid-1860s encouraged Whistler to continue his experiments with decidedly non-narrative, decorative painting. By the early 1870s, Whistler assimilated Japanese aesthetic principles into his style, as in Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge (1872-73, Tate Gallery, London), seen in the high horizon line, the strong linear pattern, and the elimination of naturalistic detail.

Whistler's interest in formal rather than representational values was most clearly expressed in Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, painted in 1871 (MdO). In its attention to

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disciplined simplicity, structural severity, vigorous surface design, and a highly restricted monochromatic palette, this painting asserted the decorative potential of portraiture rather than the revelation of character. Whistler's interest in decorative ensemble informed The Peacock Room (1876-77, FGA) which was perhaps the most extraordinary single expression of the aesthetic movement in its triumph of style, artistic artifice, and the man-made world over nature. Aside from its devastating effects on Whistler's career, the 1878 Whistler-Ruskin trial was an impassioned defense of aestheticism and the independence of art from all extrinsic purposes or references.

When Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother was exhibited in Philadelphia and then in New York in 1881 and 1882, it reinforced and coalesced tendencies toward non-narrative, decorative painting, and in particular, provided a potent and provocative example of the decorative potential of modern portraiture whose primary impulse was aesthetic and formal rather than referential or representational. Indeed, Whistler's impact was most pronounced and widespread on portrait and figure painters in the 1880s who conspicuously adopted his pictorial formulae with minor variations. Cecilia Beaux's (1863-1942) first major work, Les Derniers Jours d'Enfance (1883-85, private collection), Abbott Handerson Thayer's (1848-1921) Portrait of Bessie Stillman

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(1883, private collection), Julian Alden Weir's (1852-1919) Against the Window (1884, private collection), Dennis Miller Bunker's (1861-1890) Portrait of Anne Page (1887, private collection), and William Merritt Chase's Portrait of a Lady in Pink (1889-89, RISD) are five examples among many.

The spirit of aestheticism that animated the work of many foreign-trained American artists at this time became a central factor of the annual exhibitions in the 1880s. Moreover, the exhibiting organizations themselves responded to the changing priorities in American art toward internationalism and cosmopolitanism; the founding of the Society of American Artists was the most significant example of these changes.[9] With their first exhibition in May of 1878, the Society of American Artists proclaimed its commitment to the work of younger, largely foreign-trained artists, whose provocative new styles and insistent cosmopolitanism ran counter to the prevailing aesthetics at the National Academy of Design.[10] Moreover, as artists grew increasingly self-conscious about formal issues, the actual exhibition of works gained importance for the first time; the Society of American Artists established new installation policies, including exhibiting fewer works with sufficient space between them. By the mid-1880s, decorative figure painting was dominant at Society's exhibitions. Although the rival organizations' agendas would grow increasingly parallel in the 1890s, leading to a final

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merger in 1906, the Society of American Artists remained vital in the 1880s for artists who gave primacy to formal concerns.

It was in this milieu that Alexander appeared in New York as a portraitist with the pedigree of European training, gaining public recognition almost immediately after his first participation in exhibitions in 1882. Alexander continued to work as an illustrator for Harper's, and later for the Century Company, throughout the decade. As his assignments were usually portraits, they complimented and enhanced his growing reputation as a portraitist. A commission to do a series of portraits of distinguished men of letters, arts, and politics for Century Magazine in 1886 firmly established Alexander's career by providing the widest possible circulation of his work and helping to assure what would be a lifetime of future portrait commissions.

Alexander's portrait style in the 1880s was distinguished by his attempt to reconcile the demands of realism with those of aestheticism. The earliest portraits were done in the dark and bold manner of Alexander's Munich period, concentrating on details of the face through dramatic lighting. Although Alexander would abandon the bravura brushwork of his Munich period, the durable influence of his foreign training could be seen in his somber, nearly monochromatic palette, which he scarcely

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varied throughout the decade. Moreover, the aesthetic of the sketch and mastery of technique that he learned in Munich provided Alexander with a pictorial vocabulary and an awareness of the importance of the aesthetic process, both of which informed his mature decorative style. The impact of Whistler's painting on the evolution of Alexander's decorative style reinforced his preference for a low key palette and encouraged experimentation with pictorial design at the expense of verisimilitude.

The facts of appearance remained a central aspect of Alexander's style in the 1880s, particularly in his portraits of men, yet formal concerns began to compete for prominence. It was in his images of women, in particular, that Alexander's aestheticism emerged, with pictorial structure and decorative treatment of the figure as the animating impulses. His choice of subject paralleled internationally current practices and reflected contemporary assumptions and ideals about the role of women in art and society. The decorative potential of portraiture and figure painting and the primacy of formal concerns were increasingly steady if selective currents in his work in the 1880s; they would become the main direction of Alexander's painting in the 1890s.

Alexander planned to return directly to New York after his tenure in Europe, as he wrote in a letter home, "Of

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course, no artist wants to go to Pittsburgh - Oh no - New York - which is full of artists now - and so far as I know - every American artist and student now abroad will settle there when they return - so I will be in with the young artists when I also settle there."[11] However, his dwindling financial resources brought him back to Pittsburgh in early April of 1881. By June, Alexander had reestablished his contact at Harper's with Charles Parsons, who assigned him to cover the Pittsburgh flood that devastated the city in the summer of 1881.[12] Alexander continued to work for Harper's throughout the summer and autumn, contributing illustrations of largely anecdotal subject matter for general interest articles. His most important early assignment--one that enabled him to return to New York as his financial situation improved, and resulted in several illustrations published in Harper's Weekly and Harper's New Monthly Magazine--was to travel down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, making sketches of life along the river as well as following the river coal trade from Pittsburgh, at the mouth of the Ohio River, to New Orleans, where the Mississippi River emptied into the Gulf of Mexico.[13] In the fall of 1881 Alexander returned to New York and moved into the Old German Bank Building at 14th Street and 4th Avenue, into a studio that had just been vacated by Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907).[14]

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While working as an illustrator, Alexander turned his attention to portraiture after his return to New York, receiving his first commissions in late 1881. From the outset, and throughout the 1880s, much of Alexander's work as a portraitist was linked with his employment at Harper's, and later at the Century Company. Indeed, of his first two portrait commissions, one was for the private collection of J. Henry Harper, one of the presidents of the company. Elizabeth Alexander recalled, "The way many of these portraits were painted is that Harper's would want a drawing of some well-known person, and instead of making a drawing, John would often do a portrait and then reproduce that instead of a drawing."[15]

Alexander's decision to paint rather than draw portraits for illustration may have resulted in part from his desire to establish a reputation as a portraitist rather than an illustrator upon his return from Europe. Moreover, he painted uncommissioned as well as commissioned portraits. For example, portraits from the early 1880s, such as Thurlow Weed (fig. 3) and Old Cole (fig. 6) were not commissioned works, although the former was subsequently reproduced in Harper's Weekly. The portrait of Oliver Wendell Holmes (fig. 5) was commissioned by George Tilden and Francis Williams, former pupils of Holmes, for the Harvard Medical School. The portrait of Joseph Jefferson (fig. 7) was commissioned by the actor himself and was later published in

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Harper's New Monthly Magazine.[16] In such cases when a portrait existed, it is reasonable to assume that Harper's paid a fee for the reproduction of the work in one of their two journals. By the mid 1880s, most of Alexander's commissioned portraits for illustration were drawings done for the Century Company.

Alexander's portrait of journalist Thurlow Weed (1797-1882) (fig. 3), was painted in December 1881 and immediately established the pictorial strategies Alexander would use in his male portraiture throughout the 1880s with only sight variation.[17] Seated and shown in three-quarter view, the figure emerges out of a dark indefinite background with brilliant light falling principally on the face, shirt collar, and cuffs of sleeves. Concentrating on details of the face, Alexander captures the likeness of Weed, who was nearly 80 years old at the time of the portrait. By contrast, the rest of the figure, in particular the hands, is treated very summarily. The curve of the chair follows the curve of Weed's left arm, giving a very slight hint of Alexander's emerging interest in surface patterns. The somber, tenebrous palette bears the stamp of Alexander's Munich training and is enlivened only by the areas of focused light and occasional touches of red in Weed's jacket and in Alexander's signature.

Alexander's first portrait commission not for publication was of J. Henry Harper's daughter May in late

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1881.[18] Portrait of Miss May (fig. 4) depicts a child standing in a floor length white robe next to a large dog. The treatment of the figure, the self-conscious display of white on white, and the inclusion of a white skin rug, suggest Alexander's awareness of Whistler's Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl, which was exhibited in 1881 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Union League Club in New York.[19] The details of the young girl's face are striking as her bold stare and stern expression are distinctly non-childlike. The contrast of the white robe and rug with the dark dog and background enlivens the portrait, which otherwise displays a rather conventional interest in the depiction of three-dimensional space.

Alexander made his New York exhibition debut at the National Academy of Design's 57th annual, held in March 1882, with these two portraits. Critical reception of the exhibition as a whole was guarded as the exhibition was overcrowded and poorly displayed. One reviewer complained, "The time has gone by for huge uncritical collections. . . . So the exhibition is like most of its predecessors. . . . It contains nine useless to one decent picture and two decent to one really good . . . Weed! Weed!"[20] Alexander's work was acknowledged although not greatly admired. For example, one critic wrote:

> In the corridor are two large portraits by Mr. John W. Alexander, a new exhibitor. The portrait on the Hon. Thurlow Weed is more striking than original; the face is uncompromisingly white and

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> though possibly true to nature, hardly of the right tone. The expression is somewhat staring. In the portrait of the little girl in a long robe, standing by a large black hound, Mr. Alexander loses still more by the hard quality of his work. It is quickly energized brush-work, full of Pluck and "Go!" But it is also work that lacks reflection. The tones are not thought out. They are dashed at and too often missed. This is true in spite of all the . . . readjustments of lighting, such as any picture needs.

The reviewer concluded his remarks on the installation of Alexander's work as an indication of the poor state of affairs for artists at the National Academy of Design: "Both the portraits are hung worse than not at all, and appear, therefore, to greater disadvantage. Mr. Alexander enters the overcrowded profession with plenty of courage, and will need all of his courage, together with tremendous application, to carry him through. For the present he seems to be painting too big pictures."[21] Alexander reacted to such criticism in a sanguine manner: "I have certainly made a good start here and the papers are giving me very flattering notices and encouragement."[22]

Harsh criticism of the National Academy of Design's practices on selection and exhibition of works was common, and at times heated, throughout the early 1880s. Such criticism was a response in part to the Society of American Artists, still a relatively young rival, whose exhibitions provided a viable alternative to the National Academy of Design's and established a standard for installation that could not be matched by the veteran institution. For

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example, a reviewer of the National Academy of Design annual reproved:

> These [exhibitions] are without standards to govern the acceptance of works of art. They are unwieldy in size and arranged without regard to the delicate adjustments of color which are absolutely necessary in such matters. It now appears that members refuse to serve on hanging committees, or when appointed, shirk their duties to such an extent that the Academy feels called upon to devise penalties for those who decline or evade work. No wonder this is the case when paintings are accepted without regard to merit and a painter who is an academician or associate can render the Academy ridiculous in the eyes of the public by insisting on the hanging of a picture beneath the contempt of a tyro. The line must be drawn somewhere.[23]

Throughout 1881, 1882, and 1883, Alexander continued to paint portraits of distinguished men of letters and politics, many for publication in Harper's Weekly, including: President Arthur (Harper's Weekly, October 1, 1881); Daniel Webster (Harper's Weekly, January 21, 1882); Henry Longfellow, (Harper's Weekly, April 8, 1882); Ralph Waldo Emerson, (Harper's Weekly, May 13, 1882); Alexander H. Stephens, (Harper's Weekly, March 10, 1883); Peter Cooper, (Harper's Weekly, April 14, 1883); Oliver Wendell Holmes (1883, fig. 5) and Parke Godwin (1883). Alexander typically employed the same compositional strategies seen in the portrait of Thurlow Weed. A seated figure is shown in three-quarter view, placed against a dark, indefinite background, with emphasis on the details of the face and highlights on the shirt collar and the cuffs of sleeves. In the portrait of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1904) (fig. 5),

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painted for Harvard Medical School, the figure is shown standing, with his eyes engaging those of the viewer. In this portrait and Mr. Cole (1881, fig. 6), Alexander's bravura brushstroke, which distinguished his work from his Munich period, appears in the treatment of textures, as in Mr. Cole's fur collar and beard. In both portraits the figure is only summarily sketched in and is barely distinguished from the background. All attention is focused on the face. Such a sketchy treatment of the male figure may relate in part to Alexander's method, as described by Elizabeth Alexander: "John made very few drawings. He always painted directly on the canvas. He would put a few lines in for position and go right to work."[24] It also looks forward to, if unintentionally, the gender distinction--that is, the overtly decorative treatment of women and their gowns and the far more realistic portrayal of men with only incidental decorative effects--in Alexander's later paintings.

Alexander singled out his portrait of Parke Godwin (1816-1914), the former editor of the New York Evening Post, as his best work to date: "I have been hard at work . . . and have just finished what I hope is my best so far - a portrait of Parke Godwin - tomorrow or next day it goes to the Academy."[25] This was the one painting Alexander exhibited at the National Academy of Design's 58th annual in 1883. Although the exhibition reviews remained largely

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critical of the exhibition as a whole, Alexander received encouragement: "In the South Gallery the portrait that takes the attention . . . [is] that of Mr. Parke Godwin by Alexander" one critic remarked.[26] In considering Alexander's career as a portraitist in 1887, Alfred Trumble singled out the portraits of Thurlow Weed and Parke Godwin as particularly fine. He wrote, "Upon his first appearance at our exhibitions, Mr. Alexander made a position for himself among the leaders of a new generation of American painters. With his portraits of Thurlow Weed and Parke Godwin, he raised himself to a permanent place in the front rank of American portrait painters."[27] Alexander's portraits in the early 1880s received some critical attention and, in a limited sense, established his reputation. However, the portraits were characterized by a general lack of vitality and compositional coherence and gave little indication of the direction of his mature work. It was not until the middle and late 1880s that Alexander's search for a viable style would begin to coalesce.

In the winter of 1883-84, Alexander received a commission from Joseph Jefferson (1829-1905), one of America's most acclaimed comic actors. Jefferson had made his name in the theater in the 1860s with his portrayal of Rip Van Winkle, but it was his interpretation of Bob Acres in the revival of Richard B. Sheridan's (1751-1816) The Rivals in 1880 that secured Jefferson's fame and remained

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the greatest achievement of his nearly fifty-year career. The life-size portrait, Joseph Jefferson as "Bob Acres" (fig. 7), depicts the actor in costume, standing at the edge of the stage. The stage setting is minimal; a bamboo chair and silver tray add a touch of color and geometry to the spare interior. Although the background is roughly sketched in the dark Munich palette that Alexander used in other male portraits of this period, the figure is brightly lit with footlights from below. Jefferson's flamboyant costume of yellow pantaloons and a light green waistcoat and vest, embellished with brilliant sequin buttons and dashes of red, is dexterously portrayed by Alexander and reveals his skillful handling of high key color within a limited tonal range for the first time. The stage lighting focuses attention on the gesture of the hands--Jefferson seems to be removing his white glove--and the face, whose whimsical and vivacious expression captures the viewer's gaze. Moreover, the lighting accentuates the elongation of the figure, the most obvious allusion to conventions of grand manner portraiture. Although the face is very realistically portrayed and detailed, the gentle s-curve of Jefferson's body and attention to the details of costume and drapery hint at Alexander's preoccupation with these decorative elements in the 1890s.

Joseph Jefferson as "Bob Acres" was Alexander's first venture into theatrical portraiture, a genre he would return

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to intermittently throughout his career. Alexander's receipt of the commission from Jefferson at this point in his developing career was auspicious. It furthered his reputation as a portraitist of distinction while revealing his particular skills in theatrical portraiture, a genre which had a well-established tradition in America.

Echoing in part the principles of grand manner portraiture as established by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), in particular in his late eighteenth-century portrait Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse (Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California), and later Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1839), for example his portrait John Philip Kemble as Hamlet (c.1801, Tate Gallery, London), American artists had essayed theatrical portraiture at least as early as the late eighteenth century.[28] Examples of such work include Gilbert Stuart's (1755-1828) portrait of Mrs. Siddons (National Portrait Gallery, London) painted while he was in London, Charles Wilson Peale's (1741-1827) portrait of Nancy Hallam as Fidele in Shakespeare's Cymbeline (1771, Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia), Thomas Sully's (1783-1872) portrait of the English actor George Frederick Cooke as Richard III (1811-12, PAFA), and Henry Inman's (1801-1846) William Charles Macready as William Tell (1826-27).

As William Gerdts has pointed out, a successful theatrical portrait presented a particular challenge for the artist:

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> to create a triple image in one: he should present the likeness of the actor (or actress) still recognizable and distinctive; he should project the character of the subject being portrayed, in historical and traditional terms, for audience satisfaction; and he should, if possible, suggest the specific interpretation of the subject by the performer.[29]

Alexander's portrait succeeded on all three levels: Joseph Jefferson's likeness is revealed in his wizened quizzical face with a prominent nose and chin; Alexander captures the whimsical and vivacious character of Bob Acres whose comic mannerisms, as interpreted by Jefferson, are matched only in humor by Mrs. Malaprop's malapropisms.[30] It is reasonable to assume that it was principally due to the success of this theatrical portrait that Alexander received commissions from actors and actresses throughout his career.

Alexander's portrait of Joseph Jefferson was exhibited in the National Academy of Design's 59th annual in 1884 and won instant critical acclaim. One reviewer found the Academy's exhibition policies insupportable, as witnessed by the hanging of this portrait:

> Among the oddities of the hanging . . . [is] the hiding of the portrait of so popular, and justly popular, an actor as Mr. Joseph Jefferson in the darkest part of the same "gallery." . . . Mr. Alexander has a custom of showing yearly at least one vivacious and thoroughly alive portrait. This year he is on hand, somewhat crippled by the Hanging Committee, who have hung his best contribution in the worst corner of the Corridor, but still too able to be suppressed by small measures. Only absolute rejection could suppress the clever qualities of this Joseph Jefferson as "Bob Acres".

The poor hanging of the portrait notwithstanding, the critic

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praised Alexander's achievement and continued:

> The delightful comedian is on the stage, footlights shining all over except the feet and upper face. He is grinning the inimitable grin which gives the key to his conception of the part. . . . Mr. Alexander gives very neatly one of the poses characteristic of Jefferson, and the charming costume adds greatly to the general effect. It is pleasant to see this painter gaining in sureness and briskness of handling.[31]

In 1887, Trumble referred to the portrait as "one of the most original and masterly works ever produced in America."[32] Jefferson was thoroughly pleased with the results of the commission and was reported to have exhibited the picture in the lobby of every theater he played thereafter.[33]

Alexander first exhibited a formal painting at the Society of American Artists (SAA) in 1884. His association with the SAA was significant in Alexander's developing career as his work became linked with and discussed with the more modern tendencies in American art, in particular the aesthetic current in portraiture which was de rigueur at the SAA's annual exhibitions. Moreover, his submission to the seventh annual SAA exhibition in 1884, Mrs. Samuel Tilton (fig. 8), was the first portrait that bore the imprint of Alexander's informed search for a decorative style. A reviewer of the exhibition remarked, "John W. Alexander helps redeem the gallery with the portrait of an old lady - the face beautifully resolute, thoughtful, well-weighed as to the brushwork, the hands somewhat neglected."[34] By this

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time, Alexander's awareness of Whistler's work--in particular his Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1871--was inevitable as it was exhibited in Philadelphia in 1881, followed by the fifth annual exhibition of the Society of American Artists in 1882.[35]

In his portrait of Mrs. Samuel Tilton (Helen Reed), Alexander utilized Whistler's compositional formula of portraying the woman seated in profile in a very shallow space--the figure seems to press against the surface of the canvas--against an indefinite background parallel to the picture plane. The precise outline of Mrs. Tilton's form becomes part of the surface design of the picture and is enhanced by the fragment of the curved arm of the chair, which further flattens the composition by calling attention to its pictorial structure. Such an appropriation and adaptation of Whistler's compositional formula was not uncommon. Chase's Dora Wheeler (1883, Cleveland Museum of Art), was another example of this appropriation and was also exhibited at the SAA's 1884 annual.

The enduring impact of Alexander's Munich training is seen in the overall dark tonality of the portrait as well as the bravura handling of the fur trimming of the dress and the lace at the collar. But it is the striking candor and realism of Mrs. Tilton's face that distinguish this painting. She gazes directly at the viewer and her physical

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appearance is etched onto the surface of the canvas through strong, flat light. Although Alexander would ultimately abandon this dark manner and boldly realistic style of portraiture, this was the first painting where he skillfully reconciled the traditional demands of realism in portraiture--that is the facts of appearance--with his maturing taste for aestheticism and decorative surface design.

Alexander's first trip to Europe after he returned from his studies abroad in the late 1870s was in the summer of 1884. Although this was not a working trip per se--Alexander did not have a specific commission from Harper's--he planned to visit art galleries and the Paris Salon to further his art education. After arriving in Gibraltar in late May, Alexander travelled to Madrid where he was dazzled by the art he saw, particularly that of Velázquez. He wrote in a letter home:

> I am filled to the brim with good pictures - and am most anxious to get back and to work again but the trip is only about a third over - and I have yet many miles of pictures to see and study - Have found Velasquez [sic] even beyond my dreams and have visited the picture gallery daily. This gallery alone would pay for the time and money of the trip.[36]

Alexander's interest in the art of Velázquez may be considered as part of the international revival of enthusiasm for Velázquez's art in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s by artists as diverse as Manet, Bonnat, Sargent, Eakins, Whistler, and Chase. Velázquez's portraits, in

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particular, provided vital aesthetic models for contemporary artists: Whistler, for example, admired the decorative qualities of Velázquez's portraits and their elegant balance of three-dimensional illusion and surface design; the intense realism and sculptural quality, underscored by strong lighting, of the Spanish master's style attracted Eakins and Bonnat; Velázquez's austere color scheme, his emphasis on technique, and his economical method influenced a wide range of artists during this period and led a commentator to remark in 1910, "Velázquez was more modern than all the moderns."[37] In 1895, R. A. M. Stevenson wrote a book-length study on Velázquez that addressed the "dignity of technique" in the Spanish master's art and its international influence upon contemporary figure and portrait painters. He wrote:

> To see the Prado is to modify one's opinion of the novelty of recent art. Landscape and landscape with figure may be more independent of the past, but figure painting certainly owes much to Velázquez. . . . Not that they have plagiarized, but that in the natural growth of ideas, the seed of thought has been blown from Spain to every part of the world.[38]

By mid-July, Alexander was in Holland where he planned to stay for one month to sketch from nature. At this time, he first articulated his interest in figure painting at the expense of conventional portraiture. "Next spring I hope to have a picture in the Ex[hibition] - a subject and not a simple portrait - It will be my first serious attempt and I have been working hard at it for some months. . . . It is

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very simple - only one figure but in it I want to express a sentiment and think it will either be a hit or a great step up."[39] Until this point in his career, Alexander's work reflected his engagement with the reconciliation of realism and aestheticism in portraiture. This statement alludes, if obliquely, to a change of focus away from portraiture per se to figure painting in general. Although it is not certain which painting Alexander referred to, the statement may relate to his portrait of Miss Abbe (fig. 9), his most aesthetic portrait to date, which he began immediately after his return from Europe. In fact, this work clearly revealed Alexander's search for a decorative style that would provide him with a viable means of expanding the conventional boundaries of portraiture. The insistently decorative treatment of the figure and the attention to overall surface design at the expense of realistic details distinguished this work as a "picture" as well as a "portrait." That the painting was known as Azalea as well as Miss Abbe further underscored Alexander's evolving decorative motive.[40] Although this self-consciously decorative portrait was not exhibited in the 1880s, Alfred Trumble's selection of the work for reproduction and detailed discussion in his critical study of contemporary American art in 1887 attested to its currency.

Decorative vitality and the willingness to experiment with surface design would characterize Alexander's portraits

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of women as distinct from the portraits of men throughout the decade. This gender distinction--that is, the overtly decorative treatment of female figures which emphasized surface design at the expense of realistic details in contrast to paintings of men which emphasized character and physical likeness with only incidental decorative effect--was not an accidental one and, in fact, became dominant in Alexander's work in the 1890s. One possible reason for this distinction between the feminine and the masculine in his work was that women's gowns lent themselves readily to decorative stylization and abstraction. Moreover, the natural curves of the female body itself, revealed beneath the gown, conformed to one of the fundamental elements of composition--the curved, sinuous line or the "Line of Beauty" as Hogarth called it--with its attendant connotations of natural grace, balance, and restrained vitality. In fact, in an artists' handbook on pictorial composition published in 1903, author and Associate National Academician Henry Rankin Poore used a line drawing of Alexander's Repose (fig. 38) to illustrate the principles of Hogarth's Line of Beauty (fig. 10).[41]

The association of women with beauty was not new in the late nineteenth century, nor was Alexander atypical in presenting women as decorative, beautiful objects in his art. Scores of American and European artists, with widely diverging artistic agendas and methods, turned to female

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subjects for their decorative stylizations and modern allegories, while preserving the portraits of men as expressions of personal character and physical verisimilitude. This gender distinction, however, took on a new, if subliminal, tone in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as these images of women increasingly diverged from and were inconsistent with the contemporary world in which women lived. Changes effected by economic growth and urbanization in America were rapidly transforming women's role in modern society and challenging domestic life as the exclusive domain of women. Women sought employment outside of the home, attended college in unprecedented numbers, and struggled for reform through political action as represented by the suffrage movement. In spite of these changes, or perhaps in part attributable to them, the decorative treatment of women remained a fundamental aspect of many artists work, including Alexander's, and reflected established and widespread gender assumptions and expectations of the period.[42]

Alexander selected an extended horizontal format for his portrait of Miss Abbe, who is shown seated on a sofa on the left side of the composition, gazing at a vase with a single branch of azaleas. Placed in nearly strict profile with her eyes averted from the viewer, Miss Abbe is remote and pensive; her hands crossed at her knees add to her sense of self-containment. The face is depicted in realistic

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detail--clearly marking this work as one from the 1880s--yet the rest of the canvas is given over to the decorative arrangement of forms and low key colors. Miss Abbe's body is rigid and angular, in contrast to the gentle, sloping curves of the sofa, yet is balanced compositionally with the cut-off picture frame that fills the upper right hand corner of the painting.

This portrait was the first to fully exhibit Alexander's purposeful manipulation of line, color, and form to enhance the decorative and aesthetic impact of the composition.[43] The seemingly informal asymmetry of the composition, the visual emphasis on the off-center vase, and the arbitrarily cut-off forms clearly emulate Japanese design principles, while Alexander's insistence on geometry, flat patterning of the surface, and a muted low key palette owe a clear debt to Whistler. Here, Alexander abandoned the indefinite background out of which the figure emerged that he had used in portraits earlier in the decade. Instead, he utilized large flat areas of color and empty space as compositional elements to enhance the decorative effect of the work. The arabesque lines that decorate the sofa call further attention to the linear rhythms on the surface of the picture and anticipate a work of ten years later, Repose (fig. 38), where Alexander would use this compositional strategy to its fullest decorative potential. The exaggerated horizontal format, although not common in

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Alexander's oeuvre particularly during the 1880s, further underscored the decorative arrangement of forms across the surface of the canvas. As Miss Abbe, one can accept this painting as a portrait; as Azalea, one sees the work as an elegant arrangement of line, color, and form.

Trumble singled out Azalea's vital quality as a "picture" and as a portrait likeness for discussion. He wrote:

> It is at once a portrait and a picture which Mr. John W. Alexander gives us with his "Azalea". Touched with the hand of an artist, and inspired with the spirit of a poet, what would in ordinary hands have been, at best, a charming woman sitting for a picture, has been transformed into a picture of which she is the heroine. The grace of line, the simple beauty, and perfect balance of composition, and the broad and striking chiaroscuro of the original are reproduced with remarkable fidelity in the copy. But no reproductive process, so ever masterly, could more than dimly hint at the refinement of color and the dazzling luminosity with which the artist has pervaded his canvas. The greatest charm of Mr. Alexander's art is in the qualities which can never be transferred from the canvas. Light and air may be captive by the brush, but by the brush alone; their intangible spirit surrenders to no ruder or less sentimental tool.

He concluded:

> His has the largeness of great art, his color is of the first order, and his command of form that of a master. Endowing his portraits with the highest pictorial quality without impairment of their personal value, he has created for his own honor a most distinctive and striking form of artistic expression, on which his fame will permanently rest . . . and every successive creation of his brush has marked the expansion and perfection of a talent whose progressiveness is the best guarantee of its brilliant future.[44]

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Although Alexander continued to do illustrations for Harper's throughout the 1880s, in 1886 he received his most prestigious and important commission from the Century Company, Harper's competitor, to do a series of portraits of distinguished men of letters, arts, and politics, residing in the United States and England. Alexander may, in fact, have known Richard Watson Gilder (1844-1909), the editor of Century Magazine, from his association with the Society of American Artists of which Gilder was a founding member. Certainly Gilder's direct involvement with artists' activities in New York in the 1870s and 1880s helped him to secure for Century Magazine the works of the finest artists including Alexander, Edwin H. Blashfield (1848-1916), Robert Blum, Kenyon Cox, Arthur B. Frost, Alfred Parsons (1847-1920), Joseph Pennell (1857-1903), Irving R. Wiles (1861-1941), among others. There was great competition for artists between the two illustrated magazines, Harper's New Monthly Magazine, the older of the two, and Century Magazine, in the 1880s. Many worked, as Alexander did, for both publications. Century Magazine had particular success in the 1880s with short stories and serial biographies and fiction, while their copious, high-quality illustrations helped the magazine reach its peak of circulation--well-over 200,000--by the end of the decade.[45]

Alexander's first portraits for the commission were completed in the spring of 1886 and included likenesses of

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John Milton Hay (fig. 11), Frank Richard Stockton (figs. 13 and 14), and John Burroughs (fig. 12). As with the earlier illustrations for Harper's, Alexander would paint or draw a portrait of the sitter, which was then submitted for reproduction in the magazine. Indeed, the portraits Frank Richard Stockton and John Burroughs both appeared as frontispieces for an article on the respective sitters and were cited as "after a drawing by" or "portrait by" Alexander in the index of the magazine.[46] The portrait of John Milton Hay (1838-1905) (fig. 11) was probably the first in this series, painted in March 1886. A lawyer, Hay had been one of President Lincoln's assistant private secretaries with John George Nicolay. In 1887, Hay and Nicolay signed a contract with Century Magazine for a serial publication of their biography of Lincoln for an unprecedented $50,000.00.[47] Alexander's crayon drawing shows Hay seated and slightly turned, with his hands crossed on his lap. The expression on Hay's face is stern and concentrated, perhaps alluding to the enormous task of his undertaking; the biography was later published in ten volumes by the Century Company. Except for the details of the face, Alexander used long, curved strokes to rapidly sketch in the body and elements of Hay's waistcoat and vest.

Alexander found this pictorial strategy--concentration on details of the face with the form and clothing loosely suggested through rapid strokes--particularly useful for

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these male portraits and used it repeatedly. For example, John Burroughs (1837-1921) (fig. 12), the essayist and naturalist, is shown seated in profile. The face is depicted in detail while the body and chair are only suggested with long, energetic strokes.[48] Alexander did two portraits of the novelist and short story writer Frank Stockton (1834-1902) (figs. 13 and 14)--one a bust in profile and the other a seated figure-- to illustrate a biographical essay on the writer. The profile bust portrays Stockton as retrospective and serious, with light falling on his face. Although frontal in the seated portrait, Stockton does not engage the viewer's eyes but is shown in contemplation with Alexander's signature long, curved strokes suggesting the form and minimal background.[49] In his portrait of James McCosh (1811-1894) (fig. 15), painted in January 1886 for Princeton College, Alexander depicts the elderly scholar in profile, emerging from an indefinite background, with light concentrated on the face and white shirt collar and cuffs, as he had done in the portrait of Thurlow Weed in 1881. Alexander exhibited this portrait in the National Academy of Design's 61st annual of 1886 thus highlighting this work, and by extension many of the others in the series, as a portrait primarily and only incidentally as an illustration.[50]

Although to a lesser degree than in his images of women, Alexander's portrayal of male sitters owed an

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aesthetic and pictorial debt to Whistler's example, in particular to Whislter's use of an indefinite background to envelop the figure. Alexander's portraits of men depart from Whistler's example, however, as Alexander always used the sitter's name for the title of the portrait. In fact, Whistler's assignment of decorative titles to his images of men as well as women--for example, Arrangement in Gray: Portrait of the Painter (1872, DIA) and Arrangement in Flesh Color and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret (1883-83, MMA)--was exceptional in the late nineteenth century. As Bailey Van Hook points out, gender distinction in late nineteenth-century art could be detected in the titles of the paintings themselves; portraits of women almost invariably bore decorative titles while portraits of men, which emphasized individual characterization, carried the sitter's name. She writes, "Although women are the main focus within the composition, they are rarely referred to in the title. Rather, the artist called attention to some other object (a kimono, vase, spinet, bowl or roses, figurine). . . . Alternately, the painter emphasized a tonal element in the composition such as a dominant color."[51] Robert Reid's (1862-1929) The Violet Kimono (1910, MMA), Childe Hassam's (1859-1935) Tanagra (1918, NMAA), Alexander's The Blue Bowl (fig. 58), and Will Low's (1853-1932) Purple and Gold (1889, NAD) are only four examples among numerous others. Such titles submerge the sitter's identity into the composition

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and draw attention to her as a decorative object. At the same time, the titles remove the works from the strict realm of portraiture.

In the summer of 1886, Alexander made his second trip of the decade to Europe, in part to continue his series of portraits of literary men for Century Magazine. Spending most of the summer in England, Alexander drew and/or painted likenesses of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), Austin Dobson (1840-1921), Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), and George Bancroft (1800-1891). Alexander's portrait of Stevenson (fig. 16) concentrates on his eyes and hand, in which his head rests. George Bancroft (fig. 17), the aged historian and diplomat, is shown in profile with highlights on his full white beard.[52] Both portraits depict just the head of the sitter, concentrating exclusively on details of the face and expression. While in London, Alexander renewed his contact with Whistler. In a charcoal portrait of his fellow artist (fig. 18), Alexander depicts him in a characteristically haughty pose. Whistler turns to gaze at the viewer--his face is depicted in some detail--while the rest of his figure is very summarily sketched in.[53] Alexander also spent time in Ireland, doing a number of illustrations and landscape sketches for a series of articles about Ireland by Charles DeKay, which appeared in Century Magazine in 1889 and 1890.[54]

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In addition to portraits of literary men, Alexander did portraits of actors--perhaps as a result of his great success with Joseph Jefferson in 1884--and other fellow artists. For example, Alexander did a series of portrait studies of John Gilbert (1810-1889) in 1886 to illustrate an article on the actor.[55] The most ambitious of these portraits was the full-length depiction of John Gilbert as "Sir Peter Teazle" (fig. 19). As in the portrait of Joseph Jefferson, Alexander depicts Gilbert in one of his best-known roles, in full costume, although seen here without the dramatic footlighting that distinguished the earlier portrait. Although the pose is elegant, the figure is relaxed and casual, with a very engaging expression on his face; the background is minimal and does not compete with the figure for attention. Alexander also did a charcoal portrait of the painter Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910) (c. 1886, Century Club, New York) during this time, continuing the practice of painting fellow artists that he had begun in Polling and would continue, off and on, for the rest of his career.[56]

Of all the portraits commissioned by Century Magazine, by far the best-known and most often exhibited image was that of Walt Whitman (1819-1902). Alexander visited the venerable American poet in his home in Camden, New Jersey, at least twice in February of 1886, during which time he made a drawing of Whitman's head (fig. 20) and began a

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seated portrait in oil.[57] Elizabeth Alexander later recalled the memorable visit:

> He [Alexander] painted this in a small sitting room of the house in Camden, with a very large green . . . parrot on a stand just behind his head; so he had to sit very close to Whitman to get any light on his canvas. He said every time he leaned back or shoved his chair back, this parrot would make a grab for his hair. He had two sittings, in one he made the drawing and another the portrait.[58]

The drawing of the aged poet's head is sketched in rapidly with pencil-and-pastel on brown paper; detail is minimal except in the eyes and the ponderous beard.[59] In the oil portrait (fig. 21), completed in 1889, Alexander returned to a compositional formula he had used several times in the 1880s for male portraits; a full-length seated figure is shown in three-quarter view emerging from a dark, indefinite background, with light falling on the face and hands. Whitman's face, framed by his stark white hair and beard, is depicted with great detail and finesse. Alexander's use of black is particularly adept in the depiction of Whitman's clothing and contrasts sharply with the white cuffs of the sleeves and hands. As with other male portraits from the period, the emphasis on surface design and decorative treatment of the figure is minimal. It is the details of the face and the expression of the dignified poet's character that command Alexander's attention.

It was precisely this gender distinction as reflected in Alexander's portrait of Walt Whitman--that is, the more

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decorative treatment of women and the more representational depiction of men--that critic Charles Caffin (1854-1918) addressed in his discussion of Alexander's decorative style in 1905. He remarked:

> In his male portraits, such as those of Walt Whitman . . . the expression of character is more pronounced. This is partly due, no doubt, to the fact that the respective characters are strongly marked upon the exteriors of these men; but partly, also, we may suspect, to the fact that they are men, and therefore outside the best of Alexander's usual study. On the one hand, therefore, he turns upon them a scrutiny that is the keener because the object of the study is comparatively novel, and on the other, since they do not wear skirts or lend themselves to his special kind of pictorial motive, he views them with an eye sole to what they are. Further, they are all men who mean much to him, and what they mean he has tried very zealously to put into their portraits, so that they must be reckoned among his most important works.[60]

Caffin's article appeared in 1905 when Alexander's decorative style was widely known and was directly associated with his female imagery. Writing even later about the gender distinction in Alexander's work, critic John C. Van Dyke (1856-1932) wrote about his portrait of Walt Whitman, "It had spirit and life in it, but gave little indication of what Alexander's style would ultimately become."[61] Although commentators did not specifically address the gender distinction in Alexander's work before the early 1900s, his methodology was clear by the late 1880s. One need only compare Walt Whitman with Mrs. Draper (fig. 22) of one year earlier to see Alexander's different approach to male and female subjects: the former were

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generally more restrained and conservative and concentrated on facial details and expression; decorative treatment of the figure and interest in surface design characterized the latter. This distinction may be seen in many other artists' works of the period and reflect firmly established and widespread gender expectations of the period.

Alexander's portrait of Whitman was one of many likenesses of the poet, who had become a favorite subject for artists in the 1880s. A contemporary journal reported:

> During the last six months J. W. Alexander, of Pittsburgh, has completed a life-size study in crayon; Mr. Mone, the Boston sculptor, has modelled a head and a statuette of the poet in his chair; Hubert H. Gilchrist of England, has finished a portrait in oil; Augustus Saint-Gaudens is planning a trip to Camden to take studies for a bust; and Thomas Eakins has begun work on a portrait.[62]

Although Whitman was portrayed regularly, his remarks on the portraits, as recorded by his friend Horace Traubell (1858-1919), suggest that he was not always pleased with the results. With respect to Alexander's portrait Whitman said:

> Alexander came, saw, but did he conquer? I hardly think so. . . . I am not sorry the picture was painted, but I would be sorry to have it accepted as final or even as fairly representing my showdown. I am a bit surprised, too; I thought Alexander would do better, considering his reputation. Tom Eakins could give Alexander a lot of extra room and yet beat him at the game.[63]

Alexander's portrait commission for Century Magazine was his most important one of the decade as it provided steady employment and, more important, it guaranteed the widest possible circulation of his work. With this series,

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Alexander emerged as a portraitist and rather than an illustrator. The subsequent steady stream of portrait commissions throughout his career, particularly by men, attested in part to the great success of this series. In 1916, John Wesley Beatty (1851-1924), a long-time friend of Alexander's and the first director of art at the Carnegie Institute, remarked on this series, "His early drawings of famous men for Century Magazine will be recalled as masterpieces of simple and direct delineation of character."[64]

Alexander continued his investigations in aesthetic portraiture of women, as seen in Mrs. Draper (fig. 22), painted in 1888.[65] In this life-size portrait of Mary Anna Palmer (1839-1914), the young widow of noted scientist Henry W. Draper (1837-1882), Alexander depicts the figure seated, turned in strict profile. The severity of her static pose is relieved only by two greyhounds, who form converging diagonals in front of and behind the seated figure. The alertness of the dogs contrasts sharply with Mrs. Draper's aloofness.

Painted in the dark palette that recalls Alexander's Munich period, this work is as much a decorative arrangement of formal elements as it is a conventional portrait. It is dictated equally by the formal exigencies of calculated pictorial structure as by the individual physiognomy of the sitter. Mrs. Draper's black dress is painted as a solid

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flat form, unrelieved by anything save the white flower at the bodice. The severe profile, highlighted by the stark contrast of light skin against the dark background, forms an important linear element in the elegant surface design. The chief merit of the dull fawn colored greyhounds, over one of wnom Mrs. Draper absently rests her arm, lies in their elegant movement of curves and lines across the pictorial surface. The silhouettes against a plain surface and the minimal background, which includes a low vase with two sprigs of flowers and a cut-off picture frame, reinforce the decorative rather than the representational motive in this work and recall Whistler's formal figural arrangements as well as Japanese prints. At the same time, the dogs confine Mrs. Draper to a very shallow space, restricting any possibility of action. The compositional device of embedding the figure within a two-dimensional pattern enhances the decorative appeal of the portrait while suggesting the possibility of an interpretation of the model. Alexander may in fact have emphasized Mrs. Draper's confinement and melancholic expression with respect to her recent widowhood.[66]

Although to be sure, the portrait gives a sense of Mrs. Draper's appearance, the figure is the raw material for a painting, and as such, perfectly fits W. C. Brownell's prescription for "picture-making" and the triumph of art--technique and pictorial arrangement--over nature.[67] In its

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essential conception as an aesthetic whole and its observance of formal considerations as well as representational demands, Alexander's portrait of Mrs. Draper provided Alexander with a viable means of expanding the boundaries of conventional portraiture and marked the path toward decorative figural arrangements of women which would be his metier. By this time, Alexander had assimilated many of Whistler's pictorial strategies within his own maturing decorative style, his search for which had reached a point of resolution.

From 1887 to 1892, there were many changes in Alexander's personal life, and due to frail health and limited stamina, his artistic activities were dramatically curtailed. In May 1887, Alexander became engaged to be married to Elizabeth Swan Williamson Alexander (1858-1947), (no relation) the daughter of James W. Alexander (1839-1915), president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. Elizabeth Alexander later recalled the humorous circumstances of their first meeting, after her father had grown tired of receiving mail for the J. W. Alexander whose illustrations appeared regularly in Harper's publications. Exasperated, James Alexander called upon Joseph Harper and said, "Joe, tell that young man who signs himself J. W. Alexander that I am getting all the credit for his

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illustrations and he is ruining my reputation as a business man."[68]

Alexander spent the summer of 1887 in Seabright, New Jersey, where he had a large studio built. He wrote, "I am about to use all my money in building a large studio here in Seabright. . . . It will cost me something between one and two thousand but I expect to have a great deal of profit and pleasure out of it."[69] On November 7, 1887, the two were married and moved to an apartment in the Wyoming Building, corner of 55th Street and 7th Avenue in New York, although Alexander maintained his studio in the Chelsea Building, 222 West 23rd Street, which he had moved into in early May of 1887. On September 19, 1889, their only child, James Waddell II (1889-1971), named after Elizabeth Alexander's father, was born. In 1889, John W. Alexander suffered a severe and debilitating physical breakdown. His doctor Robert Abby, who had been best man at Alexander's wedding, prescribed severely restricted activity and a protracted trip to Europe for a significant change of lifestyle.

Before sailing for Europe in 1891, Alexander turned his attention to landscape and pure still life painting, relatively rare subjects in his <u>oeuvre</u>. It is reasonable to assume that Alexander worked in these genres for relief from the rigorous demands of portrait and illustration commissions. Moreover, they were subjects he had formally essayed, if only occasionally, throughout the decade. A

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landscape, painted around 1886 (fig. 23), depicts a wooded bank at the edge of a lake, and shows Alexander as a competent landscapist. The work displays many of the characteristics of Barbizon-inspired landscape painting--muted palette, subordination of detail, lack of specific topographical reference, and broad treatment of forms--that clearly distinguish it from the Hudson River aesthetic which had dominated American landscape painting in the 1850s and 1860s.[70] The broadly painted and sketch-like Roses (fig. 24), painted at roughly the same time, demonstrates Alexander's fluency with the brush and his awareness of advanced techniques in still life and landscape painting dating back to his tenure in Polling in the late 1870s.[71] It may have been these two paintings that Alexander exhibited in New York in 1886 at the annual exhibitions of the Society of American Artists and the National Academy of Design. Of Roses one critic remarked, "Mr. Alexander has some very individual roses in the corridor."[72] That these were the last works Alexander exhibited in New York until 1894 attests to the severe restrictions in his activities in the latter part of the 1880s and early 1890s.[73]

Alexander turned his attention to landscape once again in 1890, when he spent the summer in Cornish, New Hampshire. Perhaps at the initiative of his friend and fellow artist Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933), Alexander and his family joined the burgeoning circle of artists, writers,

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architects, and patrons of the arts in Cornish (fig. 25). As early as 1885, Augustus Saint-Gaudens had summered there; one year later he was joined by Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1938). Their joint presence formed the cornerstone of the colony in Cornish: Saint-Gaudens spent his summers in Cornish from 1885 to 1897 and again from 1900 to 1907; Dewing was a dominant figure in the colony from 1886 to 1905. Artistic camaraderie, a relaxed pace of life, and the beauty of the natural setting at the base of Mount Ascutney in the Connecticut River valley surely made Cornish a thriving art colony. By the turn-of-the-century, over forty artists were resident there in the summers. Other artists in Cornish in the summer of 1890 included Henry O. Walker (1843-1929), Dennis Miller Bunker, and Arthur Henry Prellwitz (1865-1940).[74]

Alexander painted at least four landscapes during the summer of 1890: three generically titled Landscape, Cornish, New Hampshire (figs. 26 and 27) and White Birches (fig. 28).[75] These works share with his earlier essay into landscape a suppression of detail and a broad and generalized treatment of form. At the same time, the more daring compositions may reflect his investigations into decorative figure painting in the late 1880s, particularly in their emphasis on two-dimensional pictorial design and elegant flowing lines. The high horizon line, single dominant color, and even light radically flatten the

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compositions and call attention to the surfaces of the canvases. Such pictorial strategies may be broadly considered as part of an anti-realist trend in landscape painting in the post-Civil War period which rejected detail and topographical accuracy for a more decorative and generalized treatment of landscape.[76] Kenyon Cox's Landscape (1883, MMA), Flying Shadows (883, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C), and J. Alden Weir's Lengthening Shadows (1887, private collection), paintings Alexander may have been familiar with, are three examples of this trend. Such works were regular features of the annual exhibitions at the Society of American Artists and would surely have been familiar to Alexander.

At the same time, Alexander's landscapes had pictorial analogues with work being done by other artists in Cornish, particularly by Thomas Wilmer Dewing. For example, Dewing's Landscape with Figures (NMAA), painted in the summer of 1890, shares with Alexander's works a generalized treatment of landscape through the subordination of individual parts and a decorative treatment of the entire composition. Alexander was unquestionably familiar with Dewing's work by 1890. However, it is reasonable to assume that he had seen paintings by Dewing earlier in exhibitions at the Society of American Artists and at the National Academy of Design.[77] Finally, in their emphasis on the decorative effect of line and a single dominant tone, Alexander's landscapes painted

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in Cornish in 1890 anticipate his figure paintings of that decade.

In April 1891 Alexander and his family sailed for Europe on a sojourn that would ultimately last for eleven years. At his departure he wrote, "I sail with my little family next week for Europe to stay for a couple of years or so . . . When I am settled in Paris after the summer I will send you my address."[78] After arriving in late spring, and under doctor's strict orders to rest, Alexander and his family travelled to Le Pouldu, a seaside village in Brittany south of Concarneau and Pont-Aven. Alexander's choice of Brittany was not without precedent--American artists had been travelling to and painting in the area since the mid-1860s.[79] Moreover, Alexander received an invitation from his colleague and friend Arthur Studd (1863-1919), the English landscapist who was living in Le Pouldu at the time with a small group of other English and American painters.[80] The Alexanders stayed at the Goulven Inn, located at the edge of the cliffs were the estuary and ocean met, for approximately five months. Although accommodations were primitive, all the necessities could be procured and the period was one of much needed rest for Alexander.

By November 1891, the Alexanders had moved to Paris, settling into an apartment with a large studio at 31 Boulevard Berthier in the seventeenth arrondisement. Alexander's choice of neighborhoods was an auspicious one as

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the area was filled with artists including Alfred Roll (1846-1919), Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931), Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), Walter Gay (1856-1937), and Albert Besnard (1849-1934). Many of them would be his associates at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. Although Alexander's frail health prohibited him from working since his arrival in Europe, by the winter of 1891-92 his stamina was greatly improved and he began to return to painting. In a letter from December 1891, Alexander described the Paris milieu and his renewed vigor with great enthusiasm:

> My studio is really superb and the light is simply magnificent. It will spoil me for my New York place when I have to return. Our apartment and studio are together but doors can be locked and the studio is entirely separated. My life too is so much more agreeable than in New York. Here all the painters meet me with open arms and do all they can to make it pleasant for us.

He continued:

> I am working as I have never worked before for this is such a fine chance for me - and should make a great difference in my work. Everything here is in a higher place than in New York and the city is a constant delight to us. Indeed, there is no other place in the world like it. New York is a village beside it and an hour here is worth years there. People here know so much more and the artists are made especially to have a nice time. Exhibitions are constantly open and the first of modern pictures are at all times to be seen.[81]

In the winter and spring of 1892, Alexander renewed his contact with Whistler, who moved to Paris in April of that year. It is reasonable to assume that Alexander knew of and may have seen the current large and important retrospective exhibition of Whistler's work being held at the Goupil

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Gallery in London.[82] At the same time, Alexander began meeting the artists with whom he would exhibit at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. A personal invitation to meet Armand Dayot (1851-1934), Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, in April 1892 suggests that Alexander was moving in an ever-widening artistic circle.[83]

In the summer of 1892, the Alexanders returned to Le Pouldu, where Alexander turned his attention to landscape as he had done in New Hampshire in 1890. Landscape, Le Pouldu (fig. 29), probably painted during the summer, depicts a house, perhaps the Goulven Inn, at the edge of a cliff. Although the cliffs were quite formidable in their deep plunge to the sea below, this view is rather serene and subdues any sense of natural grandeur or drama by the regulated and broad horizontal bands that define the space. The pale tonal palette adds to the sense of calm.[84] Such a landscape alludes only obliquely to the radical experimentation that had taken place in Pont-Aven with Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), Émile Bernard (1868-1941), Paul Serusier (1863-1927), and the circle of artists around them. It is, however, consistent with much of the landscape painting being done by artists who, like Alexander, were experimenting with a pictorial vocabulary that was based on decorative principles rather than on a slavish imitation of nature.[85] Moreover, this landscape shares with works by

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Gauguin and his circle a simplification and a reduction of landscape elements to large flat areas, reaching toward greater abstraction through a decorative treatment of forms and colors, albeit in a less daring and less rigorous way.[86]

Landscape would not become Alexander's metier. However, his preoccupation with surface design and with decorative arrangement as seen in these works would become the basic vocabulary of his figure painting in the 1890s. Moreover, by this date Alexander had abandoned both the bravura brushwork and the tenebrous palette that distinguished his Munich-inspired works, in favor of thinly applied paint in a muted yet higher key palette. Poised at the edge of spectacular success, Alexander returned to figure painting with a renewed vigor and a decorative vocabulary that would inform his artistic production for the rest of his career.

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ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 2

1. For a consideration of the impact of foreign training on American artists and the American expatriate movement, see H. Barbara Weinberg, The Lure of Paris. Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991); idem, "Late Nineteenth-Century Painting: Cosmopolitan Concerns and Critical Controversies," Archives of American Art Journal 23, no. 4 (1983): 19-26; idem, "Renaissance and Renascences in American Art," Arts Magazine 54, no. 3 (November 1983): 172-75; idem, "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," American Art Journal 13 (Autumn 1981): 66-84; and Michael Quick, American Expatriate Painters of the Late Nineteenth Century (Dayton: Dayton Art Institute, 1976). See also David C. Huntington, The Quest For Unity. American Art Between the World's Fairs, 1876 - 1893 (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1983).

2. W[illiam C[ary] Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America; First Paper," Scribner's Monthly 20, no. 1 (May 1880): 8. The second and third articles in this series appeared in Scribner's Monthly in July 1880 and July 1881. Brownell does not consider Alexander in his discussion of the younger painters but does discuss artists with whom Alexander worked in Munich including Duveneck, Chase, Shirlaw, and Currier.

3. These three portfolios were republished in 1977. See H. Barbara Weinberg, ed., The Art Experience in Late Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977).

4. Mariana Van Rensselaer, "Frederick Arthur Bridgman," in American Art and American Art Collectors, Volume 1, ed. Walter Montgomery (Boston, 1889), p. 177, quoted in Quick, Expatriate, pp. 20-21.

5. See Earl Shinn [pseud. Edward Strahan], Art Treasures in America (Philadelphia, 1879-1882), 3 volumes. For a discussion of shifts in American patronage, see Lois Fink, "French Art in the United States, 1850-70; Three Dealers and Collectors," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 92 (September 1978): 87-100; and Frederick Baekeland, "Collectors of American Paintings, 1813 - 1913," American Art Review 3, no. 6 (1976): 122-66.

6. This figure is cited in H. Barbara Weinberg, "The Lure of Paris. Late-Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Training," in A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting. 1760 - 1910 (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts,

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1983), p. 26. For a discussion of American art at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle and the valuable reproduction of many of the works exhibited there, see Annette Blaugrund et al., Paris 1889. American Artists at the Universal Exposition (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1989), and, in particular, H. Barbara Weinberg, "Cosmopolitan Attitudes: The Coming of Age of American Art," pp. 33-52.

7. Theodore Child, "American Artists at the Paris Exhibition," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 79, no. 472 (September 1889): 489.

8. For a discussion of the aesthetic movement in America, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987).

9. For a study of the Society of American Artists and its relationship to the internationalism of American art in the late-nineteenth century, see Jennifer A. Martin Bienenstock, "The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists, 1877 - 1884" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1983).

10. For a history of the National Academy of Design, see Lois Marie Fink and Joshua Taylor, Academy: The Academic Tradition in Art (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975).

11. Letter to Col. Allen dated July 7, 1878, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 127. Hereafter, all letters are to Col. Allen unless noted otherwise.

12. The illustrations were published in Harper's Weekly, July 2 and August 11, 1881.

13. See, for example, "Done Brown, Sho's Yo' B'n," and "The Old French Market" in Harper's Weekly, November 26 1881 and January 21, 1882. Alexander did several illustrations for the article "King Coal's Highway," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 64, no. 380 (January 1882): 163-77. The latter reference is of particular interest as an early depiction of industrial subject matter, especially the illustrations "Firing Up" and "Government Light on Western Rivers". Alexander would return to this subject on a grand scale in the Carnegie Institute murals, 1905-08.

14. Lockman interview, frame 150. The first letter from New York, to E. E. Phelps, is dated December 20, 1881, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 297.

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15. Lockman interview, frame 152.

16. The portrait of Thurlow Weed appeared in Harper's Weekly December 2, 1882. A letter from Elizabeth Alexander to Hobart Nichols at the National Academy of Design from January 20, 1942, suggests that the portrait of Thurlow Weed had been in her possession since it was painted. At that time, Elizabeth Alexander donated the work to the National Academy of Design, where it remains to this day. See JWA file, National Academy of Design. For information on the portrait of Oliver Wendell Holmes, see JWA file, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. Elizabeth Alexander refers to the commission by Joseph Jefferson in Lockman interview, frame 156. The portrait of Jefferson appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in August 1886.

17. Alexander wrote, "Really I am very busy - painting several portraits - one of Thurlow Weed - who is certainly the most interesting sitter imaginable." Letter to E. E. Phelps dated December 20, 1881, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 297.

18. J. Henry Harper, House of Harper, p. 209, referred to this as Alexander's first portrait commission. Elizabeth Alexander referred to this portrait as being Alexander's second commission; the first being a portrait of Dr. Charles Dewitt Bridgeman (location unknown), clergyman of the Baptist Church, Madison Avenue and 28th Street. See Lockman interview, frame 151.

19. Whistler's Symphony in White, No. I: The White Girl was exhibited in the Loan Collection of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, May - October 1881. It was subsequently exhibited at the Union League Club. See Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret MacDonald, Robin Spencer and Hamish Miles, The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), vol. 1, p. 18. See also Bienenstock, "Society of American Artists," p.131.

20. "The Academy Exhibition," New York Times 31 (March 25, 1882): 4-5.

21. "The Academy of Design," New York Times 31 (March 30, 1882): 5. Thurlow Weed (catalogue number 631) and Portrait of Miss May (catalogue number 648) were both exhibited in the corridor.

22. Letter to E. E. Phelps dated December 20, 1881, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 297.

23. "The Academy of Design," New York Times 31 (April 30, 1882): 3.

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24. Lockman interview, frame 153.

25. Letter to E. E. Phelps dated March 3, 1883, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 307.

26. "The Academy of Design: Features of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Exhibition," New York Times 32 (April 15, 1883): 3.

27. Alfred Trumble, "J. W. Alexander," in Representative Works of Contemporary American Artists (New York, 1887), n. pag.

28. For a discussion of the tradition of theatrical portraiture in American art, see William H. Gerdts, "Natural Aristocrats in a Democracy: 1810-1870," in Michael Quick et al., American Portraiture in the Grand Manner, 1720 - 1920 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1981), pp. 33-44, 42-43. The author's observations on the history of American theatrical portraiture are indebted to Dr. Gerdts's essay. See also Portraits of the American Stage, 1771-1971 (Washington, D. C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1971).

29. Gerdts, "Natural Aristocrats," p. 34.

30. For a brief discussion of Joseph Jefferson's career, see Gerald Bordman, The Oxford Conpanion to American Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 380.

31. "The Spring Academy," New York Times 53 (April 5, 1884): 4. The critic's sarcastic reference to the corridor as a "gallery" probably alludes to the fact that Alexander's portrait of Joseph Jefferson (catalogue number 615) was hung in the corridor, as were his two portraits in the 1882 Academy annual.

32. Trumble, "J. W. Alexander," n. pag.

33. Lockman interview, frame 156. The portrait was reproduced in Harper's New Monthly Magazine 73, no. 435 (August 1886), as a frontispiece to an article by William Winter, "Joseph Jefferson," pp. 391-97.

34. "Society of Artists," New York Times 33 (March 25, 1884): 9. The exact dating of this work is difficult to trace. The date circa 1880 is generally ascribed to the portrait, based on a reference by Mary Anne Goley, John White Alexander: 1856 - 1915 (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976), which suggested that the work was painted sometime while Alexander was in Florence teaching and working with Frank Duveneck (October 1879 - March 1881). This work has

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subsequently been reproduced in Quick, Munich and American Realism, p.37 (catalogue number 2) and Quick et al., American Portraiture in the Grand Manner, p.69, with the date circa 1880. In the "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander: An Incomplete List" included in the Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of Paintings, John White Alexander Memorial Exhibition (Pittsburgh: Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, 1916), this work is listed as Portrait of Mrs. Tillin [misprint], painted before 1887, p.37. Although the dark palette and bravura handling of certain details of the dress, particularly the fur trimming, bear the imprint of Alexander's Munich training and presumably led Goley to the date of circa 1880, it is the author's contention that the work was painted in circa 1884, as the treatment of space and the interest in surface design are far more pronounced than in Alexander's work prior to this date. Moreover, the work's obvious debt to Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, which Alexander would probably not have been familiar with before 1881, precludes the validity of the earlier date.

35. Alexander first exhibited at the Society of American Artists' fifth annual exhibition, held May 1-20, 1882. His entry, 32 Pounds, an anecdotal portrait of a young boy holding a turkey, had appeared as an illustration in Harper's Weekly November 9, 1881. Bienenstock, "Society of American Artists," says that this exhibition was the second of two held in 1882; the first was more representative of the progressive style of painting preferred by the exhibition committee, pp. 134,276. Perhaps the most significant work displayed in the first of the two exhibitions was Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother (catalogue number 124). As Alexander exhibited a drawing for illustration and his work received no critical attention in 1882, the author discusses Alexander's participation in the 1884 SAA annual as his first.

36. Letter dated June 10, 1884 from Madrid, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 321.

37. James Gibbons Huneker, Promenades of an Impressionist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 110.

38. R. A. M. Stevenson, Velázquez (London: George Bell and Sons, 1895), p. 103.

39. Letter dated July 16, 1884, from Dordrecht, Holland, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 326-31. Although no such "picture" appeared in the 1885 exhibitions--in fact,

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Alexander did not exhibit at either the National Academy of Design or the Society of American Artists that year--the reference may relate to Alexander's experiments with pictorial design, as in his work Castles, exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1884 (catalogue number 251). A contemporary review of the exhibition indicated that this work was an evocative subject picture about the aesthetic process rather than a conventional portrait. The reviewer wrote, "He [Alexander] has in the South Gallery The Empty Canvas, a studio interior with easel and canvas, which as we can see by the light falling through it, is untouched: beyond sits a pleasing woman artist gazing fixedly. She is absorbed; doubtless the group is in imagination already drawn, and the masses of color already placed." See "Spring Academy," (April 5, 1884), p. 4. This is the only reference found to a work with the title An Empty Canvas. Neither of the titles An Empty Canvas or Castles appear in Carnegie Institute, "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander."

40. The titles of Alexander's portraits, particularly those from the 1890s, are difficult to pinpoint as works were often exhibited with different titles. Although the Carnegie Institute, "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," record this work with the title Miss Abbe, painted before 1887, p.39, by 1887 Trumble, "John White Alexander," referred to the work as Azalea. As the work was not exhibited in the 1880s, contemporary references in the critical press, which might assist in determining the title, are unavailable.

41. See H.[enry] R.[ankin] Poore, Pictorial Composition and the Critical Judgement of Pictures. A Handbook for Students and Lovers of Art (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), pp. 123-126. For a modern discussion of some of these issues, see Julie Anne Springer, "Art and the Feminine Muse: Women in Interiors by John White Alexander," Woman's Art Journal 6, no. 1 (Fall 1985/Winter 1986): 1-8.

42. In 1920, the year the nineteenth amendment was ratified granting women the right to vote, Alexander's portrait, Mrs. Thomas Hastings (fig. 79), was used as an illustration in Emily Burbank, Woman as Decoration. A Costume Book (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1920), pp. 148-49. For a discussion of images of women in American art at the turn of the twentieth century, see Leila Bailey Van Hook, "The Ideal Woman in American Art, 1875-1916" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1988); Bernice Kramer Leader, The Boston Lady as a Work of Art: Paintings by the Boston School at the Turn of the Century (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1986); and Martha Banta, Imaging American Women. Ideas and Ideals in Cultural History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). Although an analysis of the changing roles of

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American women in contemporary society at the turn of the twentieth century is well beyond the scope and concern of this dissertation, the following books have been consulted in considering these issues: Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, For Her Own Good. 150 Years of Experts Advice to Women (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1978); Esther Katz and Anita Rapone, eds., Women's Experience in America. An Historical Anthology (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980); Gerda Lerner, The Female Experience: An American Documentary (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1977); and William O'Neill, Everyone was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969).

43. This painting is discussed in Hudson River Museum, Paintings and Drawings from the Permanent Collection, 1830 - 1910 (Yonkers: Hudson River Museum, 1986), n. pag. The catalogue essay states that this painting was commissioned to celebrate the engagement of marriage of Miss Helen Abbe to Mr. Hubert Lawson, a New York lawyer.

44. Trumble, "J. W. Alexander," n. pag.

45. For the history of Century Magazine, see Frank Luther Mott, The History of American Magazines, 1741 - 1930 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), volume III, pp.457-75.

46. In the first half of the 1880s, Harper's New Monthly Magazine and Century Magazine did not print the name of the artists in the index of illustrations. By 1887, however, most artists were cited in the index and below the illustration.

47. For information on John Milton Hay and a brief discussion of his portrait by Alexander, see National Portrait Gallery and American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Portraits from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1987), pp.66-68. The portrait of Hay is catalogue number 11.

48. This portrait of John Burroughs was published in Century Magazine 32, no 4 (August 1886) as a frontispiece to illustrate Edith M. Thomas, "John Burroughs and His Last Two Books,": 593-94. For information on Burroughs and a brief discussion of this portrait see National Portrait Gallery, Portraits in the American Academy, pp.42-44. The portrait of Burroughs is catalogue number 3.

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49. For a brief discussion of Alexander's bust portrait of Stockton, see "John White Alexander" in American Drawings and Watercolors in the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, 1985), pp.81-82. Both portraits were published in Century Magazine 32, no. 3 (July 1886) to illustrate Clarence Clough Buel, "The Author of The Lady or the Tiger,": 405-13. The bust portrait was the frontispiece to the issue while the seated portrait was published p. 413.

50. For information of James McCosh, see Donald Egbert, Princeton Portraits (Princeton, 1947), pp. 63-70. This portrait was published in Century Magazine 33, no. 4 (February 1887) as a frontispiece to John Van Cleve, "James McCosh, President of Princeton College,": 464-50. The portrait was one of two works exhibited by Alexander at the 61st annual at the National Academy of Design in the spring of 1886 (catalogue number 242). The other work was Flowers (catalogue number 17).

51. See Bailey Van Hook, "Decorative Images of American Women: The Aristocratic Aesthetic of the Late Nineteenth Century," Smithsonian Studies in American Art 4, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 51-52.

52. The portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson was published in Century Magazine 35, no. 118 (August 1888) to illustrate Henry James, "Robert Louis Stevenson,": 869-79. It may have been during this summer that Alexander became acquainted with Henry James, having first met in Florence in 1880. In a letter to Robert Underwood Johnson dated June 12, 1887, James referred to Alexander's drawing of Stevenson from the previous year. See Leon Edel, ed., Henry James Letters: Vol. III 1883 - 1895 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 186-87. The portrait of George Bancroft appeared in Century Magazine 33, no. 3 (January 1887) as a frontispiece to William M. Sloane, "George Bancroft, In Society, in Politics, in Letters,": 473-87.

53. It is likely that this portrait was part of the project commissioned by the Century Company in 1886; the work is signed and dated London 1886. This work is included in A[lbert]. E[ugene]. Gallatin, Portraits of Whistler. A Critical Study and an Iconography (New York: John Lane Company, 1918), pp.47-48 and reproduced, n. pag. The text suggests that Whistler autographed the portrait, p.16.

54. Alexander did several landscape sketches during this summer including A Bridge in Ireland, a watercolor in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum. The articles by DeKay were illustrated by several artists and appeared

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between May 1889 (volume 38, number 1) and June 1890 (volume 40, number 2).

55. The portraits of John Gilbert were published in Century Magazine 33, no. 3 ((January 1887) to illustrate a biographical essay on the actor by J. Ranken Towse, "John Gilbert,": 378-84. Alexander did other theatrical portraits during this period, including a sketch of Tomasso Salvani (1829-1915) drawn from life in Salvani's dressing room between acts of King Lear. This work is in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York.

56. This painting is cited in Mark Davis and A. Hyatt Mayor, American Art at the Century (New York: The Century Association, 1977), p. 137, in the index of drawings, watercolors, and prints.

57. For a discussion of Alexander's oil portrait of Walt Whitman 1889, see Doreen Burke, "John White Alexander," in American Paintings III: Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), p. 208.

58. Lockman interview, frame 153.

59. The drawing of Walt Whitman is in the collection of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York. In a letter from Elizabeth Alexander to Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson (1853-1937), editor of Century Magazine and president of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, dated June 8, 1916, she referred to this drawing: "I am sending you the drawing of Walt Whitman, which John wished to present to the Institute of Arts and Letters. . . . John considered it the best drawing he ever made." See John White Alexander correspondence, collection of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. The drawing and oil portrait were reproduced in Harper's New Monthly Magazine 84, no. 503 (April 1892): 652, 707, although they were part of the Century Magazine commission. Burke, "John White Alexander," suggests that the portrait of Walt Whitman might have been excluded from the Century Magazine series because Whitman did not like it, p. 208.

60. Charles H. Caffin, "John W. Alexander. The Painter of Idealized Sentiment Through Portraits of Women in Poses - Some Examples of His Work," World's Work 9 (January 1905): 5695,97. Although this article was a study of Alexander's portraits of women, the portrait of Walt Whitman was the first illustration in the article, p. 5683.

61. John C. Van Dyke, "John White Alexander," in American Painting and Its Tradition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), p. 9.

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62. North Philadelphia Musical Journal 2, no. 9 (September 1887): 7; quoted in, Elizabeth Johns, Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 144, note 2. For a discussion of Eakins' portrait of Walt Whitman, see Johns, Thomas Eakins, pp. 144-69.

63. Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden, volume 4 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), quoted in Annie Nathan Meyer, "Two Portraits of Walt Whitman," Putnam's Magazine 4 (September 1908): 710. A portion of this quotation appears in Burke, "John White Alexander," p. 208. Meyer's article was written after she saw Thomas Eakins' portrait of Walt Whitman, which was publicly exhibited for the first time at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 1907 annual.

64. J[ohn]. W[esley]. B[eatty]., "A Few Words of Appreciation," in Carnegie Institute, John White Alexander Memorial Exhibition, p.9.

65. In Mrs. Draper's will in 1915, this portrait was bequeathed to the New York Public Library where it remains to this date.

66. The author thanks Dr. Gerdts for this observation.

67. Brownell, "Second Paper," p. 333.

68. Lockman interview, frame 155. Harper, House of Harper, recalled this encounter as well, p. 209.

69. Letter to E. E. Phelps dated May 21, 1887 from Seabright, New Jersey, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 381.

70. See Peter Bermingham, American Art in the Barbizon Mood (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1975). See also Doreen Bolger Burke and Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, "The Hudson River School in Eclipse," in American Paradise. The World of the Hudson River School (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), pp. 71-98.

71. For a discussion of the importance of Polling in the late 1870s for the development of landscape painting in the late nineteenth century, see William H. Gerdts, "The Teaching of Painting Out-of-Doors in America in the Late Nineteenth Century," in In Nature's Ways: American Landscape Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century (West Palm Beach: Norton Gallery of Art, 1987), pp.25-41. Roses, in particular, is reminiscent of the works of similar subjects by J. Alden Weir (1852-1919) and John La Farge (1835-1910), which might have been familiar to Alexander. Although

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rarely the subject of an entire work as here, flowers became an important pictorial element in many of Alexander's works from the 1890s and the turn-of-the-century.

72. "The Spring Academy," New York Times 35 (April 17, 1886): 3.

73. Alexander's first public exhibition after 1886 was in 1893 in Paris at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts' annual Salon. His subsequent exhibitions in the United States were at the Art Institute of Chicago Seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Artists, October 29 - December 17, 1894, and the National Academy of Design Portrait of Women Loan Exhibition, November 1 - December 1, 1894.

74. For information on the Cornish colony of artists, see John H. Dryfhout, "The Cornish Colony," in A Circle of Friends: Art Colonies in Cornish and Dublin (Keene: University of New Hampshire Press, 1985), pp. 33-57. Abbott Thayer (1849-1921) was a dominant presence in the artists' colony in Dublin, New Hampshire. He began spending his summers there in 1888; in 1901 he moved to Dublin permanently. For information on the Dublin colony, see Barbara Ball Buff, "The Dublin Colony," in ibid., pp. 9-31.

75. See Carnegie Institute, "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," p. 55. The catalogue lists two other works entitled simply Landscape and one entitled White Birches. The latter painting was included in A Circle of Friends, p. 77.

76. Several scholars have addressed these broad changes in American landscape painting in the post-Civil War period during the last two decades. A sample of such studies includes: Wanda Corn, The Color of Mood: American Tonalism, 1880 - 1910 (San Francisco: M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, 1972); Bermingham, American Art in the Barbizon Mood, 1975; William H. Gerdts, "Tonalism: Overview," in Grand Central Art Galleries, Tonalism, An American Experience (New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, 1982): Burke and Vorsanger, "The Hudson River School in Eclipse," pp. 71-98; and Bruce Weber, "In Nature's Ways: American Landscape Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Nature's Ways, pp. 7-24.

77. Alexander would likely have been familiar with Dewing's A Prelude (lost), exhibited at the sixth annual of the SAA in 1883, as was a work by Alexander, and The Days 1885 (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut), which won the Thomas B. Clarke award at the NAD's 62nd annual exhibition in 1887. For a discussion of Dewing's work up to 1885, see Susan Hobbs, "Thomas Wilmer Dewing: The Early

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Years, 1851-1885," American Art Journal 13, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 4-35.

78. Letter to E. E. Phelps dated April 22, 1891, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 122.

79. See David Sellin, Americans in Brittany and Normandy, 1860 - 1910 (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1982) for a study of this phenomenon and a brief discussion of Alexander's activities in Le Pouldu, pp. 60-61,167.

80. The Alexanders residence in Le Pouldu is noted in Lockman interview, frame []. Other artists in Le Pouldu at the time included Alfred Thornton (1863-1939) and Guy Francis Maynard. It is not clear how or when Alexander met Studd, who had travelled to Le Pouldu in 1890 after one year of study at the Académie Julian, and was very influenced by Gauguin's style.

81. Letter dated December 26, 1891, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 426-27.

82. The retrospective exhibition of 43 paintings, Nocturnes, Marine & Chevalet Pieces, was held in March and April of 1892 at Goupil Gallery. The exhibition was widely discussed in the French and English periodical press.

83. The invitation from Mr. Dayot is recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 433.

84. Landscape, Le Pouldu is reproduced in Sellin, American Painters in Brittany and Normandy, p. 116, catalogue number 50.

85. For example, Alexander's landscape shares many pictorial strategies with those of Swedish artist Allan Osterlind (1855-1922), who had come to Paris in the 1870s, and was associated with other Scandinavian artists whom Alexander later knew, including Fritz Thaulow (1847-1906) from Norway and Anders Zorn (1860-1920) from Sweden. Osterlind painted in Brittany between 1886 and 1922. For a study of the work of foreign artists in Brittany that seeks to expand the limited awareness of artistic activities in the area other than those around Gauguin, see Denise Delouche, et al., Artistes étrangers à Pont-Aven, Concarneau et autres lieux de Bretagne (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes 2, 1989). For information on Osterlind, see ibid., pp.52-58.

86. The bibliography on Gauguin and the artists working in his circle in Pont-Aven is extensive, although John Rewald, Post-Impressionism From Van Gogh to Gauguin (New

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York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956) remains a standard source on the subject. Gauguin was in Le Pouldu in 1889 and stayed at the Goulven Inn, moving to the only other inn in the village, named for Mademoiselle Marie Henry (also called Marie Poupée). Gauguin, Serusier, and other artists remained there through the fall of 1889 and painted the walls at Marie Poupée's, works that Alexander may have seen during his two summers there. See ibid., pp.291-94.

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CHAPTER 3

1893 - 1896: PARIS I
ARTICULATION OF DECORATIVE STYLE

Alexander's search for the decorative in the 1880s led him to tentative experiments with two-dimensional design and surface patterning in portraiture without abandoning verisimilitude. These essays in decorative figure painting were reinforced by his exposure to the art of Whistler, which provided Alexander with decorative pictorial strategies, and by his engagement with contemporary art in New York, which emphasized aestheticism and formal issues over realism and narrative. From 1889 to 1892, Alexander's production of work was dramatically curtailed due to poor health. It is reasonable to assume that this hiatus provided Alexander with a crucial period of reflection and synthesis of ideas with respect to his developing decorative style. Without the burden of portrait commissions Alexander was free to pursue experiments with decorative pictorial design beyond the limitations of representational accuracy. Moreover, the interruption of illustration commissions, which were primarily portraits of men, allowed Alexander to concentrate on images of women whose gowns lent themselves to decorative stylization. His rare excursions into landscape painting in 1890 and again in 1892 provided him with pictorial strategies--particularly simplification of form and flattening of composition--that he would apply to

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his decorative figure painting in the following year. Finally, his exposure to newer directions in figure painting in Paris in 1892 and 1893 may have reinforced his decorative tendencies and provided the context within which Alexander articulated his striking new style.

Alexander's Salon debut in Paris in 1893 stands as a critical point in his career. Stylistically, it marked the decisive departure from the tenebrous palette and the restrained and selective aestheticism that distinguished his style in the 1880s, to a decorative treatment of the female figure. The three paintings he exhibited at the spring 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts reveal the basic tenets of his decorative style: simplification and flattening of form through surface patterning; elegant linear contours; asymmetrical compositions; and a restricted tonal palette with a single dominant tone. In Alexander's consciously mannered style, the female figure is treated as an interesting design element to be stylized and balanced within a decorative ensemble. Alexander's decorative style became directly linked with images of women, as distinct from his portraits of men. This gender distinction--that is, the overtly decorative treatment of women which emphasized surface design at the expense of realistic details in contrast to paintings of men which emphasized character and physical likeness with only incidental decorative effect--

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characterized Alexander's work in the 1890s and reflected established and widespread gender expectations of the period. That this distinction was common in the work of numerous artists from the period testified to the pervasiveness of these assumptions and expectations.

The Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (hereafter Nationale) provided the international context within which Alexander articulated his decorative style. Upon its secession from the Société des Artistes Français in 1890, the Nationale identified itself with advanced tendencies in art and a liberality toward modern tendencies which emphasized technique and formal concerns. Decorative figure painting was a prominent feature of its annual Salons. The internationalism of the Nationale was a vitally important aspect of the new organization. In fact, its display of foreign works and its openness to international membership was unprecedented at the time and set the standard for numerous international exhibitions in Europe and the United States in the last decade of the nineteenth century. American participation in this quintessential internationalist organization was significant from the beginning and represented the most numerous and most widely discussed of the foreign exhibitors throughout the 1890s. As such, the organization itself merits further investigation.

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The organization of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts forms an important chapter in the history of nineteenth-century French art institutions and is of particular relevance to the study of the internationalism of art at the end of the nineteenth century. The Nationale's secession from the Société des Artistes Français (hereafter SAF) underscored and accelerated the steady erosion of the Salon's prestige and hegemony in the late-nineteenth century. As such, it may be considered as part of the larger history of alternative exhibitions and secession movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which lead to the breakdown of the academic tradition. The Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, however, has been subject to very little critical or historical scrutiny. This is due, in part, to its being perceived as a split within conservative ranks and therefore, its falling outside of the oversimplified art historical narrative that has conferred quasi-heroic status on skirmishes and art institutions that forged the path to modernism, while virtually ignoring the academic and official armature within which many of these developments took place.[1]

The Nationale's secession from the SAF was hardly led by a band of marginal or avant-garde dissidents. Indeed, the Nationale's first president, Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891) was nearly 75 years old at the time of the split and was vastly successful, while the list of fondateurs features

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a most distinguished and accomplished group of artists including Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), Alfred Roll, Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), Pascal-Adolphe-Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929), and Paul-Albert Besnard (1849-1934). Albert Boime uses the term "Third Republic juste milieu" to describe many of the Nationale's artists who effected a compromise style which employed both independent and academic features.[2] Albert Besnard, for example, adopted some techniques of the independent artists, including broken brushwork and a higher key palette, while maintaining an academic armature. Boime wrote:

> We cannot overestimate the impact of this group upon the art of the Third Republic. Certainly, they debased the ideals of the Impressionists in favor of contemporary taste, but in so doing, they introduced into official and academic circles such features as a lighter palette and a looser, quasi-Impressionist execution. The juste milieu group, and especially artists like Bastien-Lepage, Roll, Besnard, and Carrière, represented to the world at large the last word in modernism. . . . At the same time, they gratified the public taste for modernism combined with traditionalism by modifying the disquieting features of Impressionism and rejecting the polished technique of the academic painters. The public could appreciate the Impressionists' doctrine of light and colour when it was made palatable by more solid draughtsmanship.[3]

This solution of compromise, which stood midway between the academic and independent styles and borrowed freely from both, appealed to the administration of the Third Republic and many of the Nationale's artists received prestigious large-scale decorative commissions.[4] The Nationale itself

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received government support, and by extension legitimacy, from the beginning.

The controversy that led to the schism within the SAF centered on the awards given at the 1889 Exposition Universelle and, in particular, whether these recipients would be entitled to subsequently exhibit works without the need of jury approval. This privilege of exhibiting hors concours was extended to artists who received awards at the annual Salon, as well as to those who received awards at the Universal Expositions in 1855, 1867, and 1878.[5] However, the 1889 Exposition Universelle jury, led by Meissonier, had distributed an unprecedented number of awards. Although Meissonier insisted that these be honored as before, others feared that the numerous recipients would further tax the already overcrowded Salon and unfairly prohibit the inclusion of works by younger artists who were still subject to the scrutiny of the Salon jury. The debate over the awards quickly deteriorated into a clash of personalities with Bouguereau and Meissonier respectively representing "la société mère et la société dissidente."[6] By early January 1890, the new group was formally established with the name Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts and with Meissonier as the president, Puvis de Chavannes as vice president, and Carolus-Duran as president of the painting section. One reviewer reported, "The schism is complete between the Meissonier and the Bouguereau camps. . . . We

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are menaced by two salons."[7] The first Nationale Salon was to open May 15 in the Palais des Beaux-Arts at the Champ-de-Mars, which had been built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The SAF would open May 1.

Innovations in the organization and exhibition policies distinguished the Nationale from the older Société from the start.[8] Following the bitter clash about awards after the 1889 Exposition Universelle, the Nationale abolished medals altogether, shifting emphasis from jury approbation to acclaim by colleagues and the public; the prospect of full membership was deemed sufficient reward. Unlike the SAF, which did not accept foreign members but did exhibit works by foreigners, the Nationale was open to membership internationally. In fact, internationalism distinguished the organization and its Salons from the beginning and was the subject of critical praise and condemnation throughout the 1890s. The restructuring of the installation of the Salon was equally important. The Nationale's exhibitions were smaller than those of the SAF and artists were allowed to exhibit as many works as desired (the SAF limited admissions to two). Moreover, the works were hung in a group, rather than separated, as was often the case at the Salon des Champs-Élysees. Such conditions were favorable for the artist and the viewer; critical approval of this innovation was nearly unanimous. One critic remarked, for example, "For the first time, the exhibition of paintings

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made every effort to deserve the name 'Salon' and the influence of its installation policies will extend, henceforth, not only to all painting exhibitions, including that of the Société des Artistes Français, but to the national museums as well."[9]

The first Salon du Champ-de-Mars opened on May 15, 1890, and featured 911 paintings. Critical approbation was overwhelming, in both the French and English press, particularly regarding the installation. Historian, art critic, and conservateur of painting and drawing at the Musée du Louvre, Georges Lafenestre (1837-1919), devoted over 50 pages to a two-part review of the new Salon in Revue des Deux Mondes, and his endorsement of the Nationale was thorough. He wrote, "In establishing themselves at the Champ-de-Mars, the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts has succeeded in improving the installation of Salons which the public had objected to for a long time."[10] Lafenestre praised the liberal impartiality of the new Salon, which was not slavishly dictated by one style or another, citing the widely diverging aesthetic practices of Meissonier and Puvis de Chavannes, the president and vice-president respectively, as proof of this. Albert Wolff (1835-1891), art critic for Le Figaro, had attacked the new Société's secession but revised his position in his review of their first exhibition and proclaimed, "Son succès est certain."[11] Comparison between the two Salons was inevitable, and the general

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consensus was that the new Salon breathed life into an otherwise moribund annual event. Art critic and author Claude Phillips (1848-1928) reported in The Art Journal:

> It would be difficult to recall any recent occasion on which the vast collection of pictures brought together in the Palace of the Champs-Élysees has, as a whole, been so profoundly uninteresting, so poor in matter for discussion, whether of a friendly or an unfriendly kind. Were it not for the youth and energy displayed in the rival show of the Champ-de-Mars, it would be necessary to conclude that a period of lassitude and ennui . . . had set in.[12]

The 1891 Salon du Champ-de-Mars introduced another important innovation; decorative art objects as well as designs for mural decorations and architectural projects were included in the annual exhibitions. Diminishing the gap between fine and decorative art, this innovation provided a legitimate forum for the presentation of objects previously excluded from the sanctified confines of Salon art. Critical approval of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, in general, remained strong. Spirited comparisons of the vitality of the new Salon to the lack of inspiration of the older one were not uncommon, although some critics began to sense an unrestrained ambition toward innovation for the sake of novelty alone at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars.[13]

Whistler's initial participation in the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in 1891 was widely noted in the critical press. Whistler submitted two works to the Nationale's Salon: Crepuscule in Flesh Colour and Green: Valpariso (1866, Tate

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Gallery, London) and Arrangement in Brown and Black: Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder, c. 1878 (exhibited with the title Arrangement en noir: No. 7, Frick Collection, New York). It is possible that Alexander saw these works at the Salon which was held shortly after his arrival in Paris. The narrow vertical format of the latter work, the disposition of the figure (shown from the rear with the face turned to the right to reveal the profile), and the use of a color in the title are paralleled in Alexander's Portrait gris (fig. 30) of two years later, and may in fact have been inspired by it. With respect to Whistler's impact on younger figure painters one critic observed:

> The influence of Whistler has been and remains considerable on our younger painters who search for unusual and delicate effects of the unity of tones. His "arrangements" and "harmonies" have demonstrated that the art of the colorist is above all concerned with subtle nuance and the analysis of colors.[14]

This assertion of Whistler's influence on decorative portrait and figure painters was only the first of what would become a compelling issue in the critical press regarding the Nationale's exhibitions throughout the 1890s. Whistler's international reputation was sealed in November of the same year when Roger Marx (1859-1913), inspector general of the fine arts, selected Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother to be purchased for the French national collection at the Musée du Luxembourg.[15] In the fall of 1891, Whistler was named

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Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, adding further official recognition to his flourishing career.

By 1892, the novelty of the new Salon had diminished, although most critics agreed that the Nationale's Salon continued to be "more artistic, more alive, more original" than its rival at the Champs-Élysées.[16] Some expressed a sense of fatigue at the display of imitative works--"Tout plutôt vulgaries . . . tout ces pastiches"[17]--which threatened to destroy the vitality of the Champ-de-Mars Salons. Moreover, the number of foreign exhibitors was both praised and condemned; of the 337 painters who participated in the Nationale's 1892 Salon, 139 were foreigners.[18]

American participation in the Nationale began with its first Salon. Fifteen Americans exhibited in 1890 including William T. Dannat (1853-1929), Alexander Harrison (1853-1930), John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), George Hitchcock (1850-1913), Phillip Leslie Hale (1865-1931), and Elizabeth Nourse (1859-1938); the first three were elected Sociétaires of the Nationale following its premiere Salon.[19] Gari Melchers (1860-1932), Pinckney Marcius-Simons (1867-1909), and Whistler exhibited for the first time in 1891. The following year, Julius Rolshoven (1858-1930) began exhibiting with the new Société. In 1893, twenty Americans participated in the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, including Alexander and Lovell Birge Harrison (1854-1929), both of whom made their first appearance that year. The peak of

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American participation in the Nationale's Salons was in 1896 when twenty-five American artists exhibited work. As such, Alexander's debut at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in 1893 took place within an international matrix that defined the Nationale and its annual Salons while following a precedent set by his American colleagues.

The 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars of the Nationale opened May 10 and featured a total of 1093 paintings. Discussions of the exhibition were lively and followed the critical agenda established in reviews of the three previous Champ-de-Mars Salons. The Nationale's vitality and high level of artistic innovation were contrasted with the less inspired and "official" art of the Société des Artistes Français, while the installation at the Palais des Beaux-Arts continued to receive the most enthusiastic notice. Due in part to the ever increasing number of foreign participants in the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, the Nationale's internationalism pervaded critical discussion. In fact, nearly every reviewer addressed the issue of internationalism in some form. Agreement on its value and impact was not forthcoming however. Georges Lafenestre, for example, began keeping a yearly count of the burgeoning number of foreign exhibitors; his tally of 154 foreigners out of a total of 352 exhibitors in 1893 led him to conclude that "cette invasion étrangère" was the most characteristic feature of the exhibition.[20] The critic for Le Siècle

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agreed that the Nationale's exhibition "had become terribly international. It amiably opened its doors and was quickly invaded." However, he praised the foreign artists, in general, for their high level of artistic expression, attributable to their development under the generous aegis of French masters.[21]

Elizabeth Pennell (1855-1936), whose art criticism was a regular feature of the Fortnightly Review and The Nation (in the latter under the pseudonym N. N.), broadly praised the foreign work at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars as the most accomplished and noteworthy of the display as a whole. She reported, "To exhaust the list of foreigners of note would be to complete a catalogue. Indeed, the one salient feature of the Salon is the prominence of the foreign exhibitors."[22] Pennell found the American display, in particular, to be among the finest of the foreign works at the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars. Moreover, in response to those critics who found the internationalism of the Nationale's Salon its weakest point, she astutely remarked, "The reason of the importance of both exhibitions [of the Nationale and the SAF] has always been their international character. . . . This is as it should be; art knows no artificial frontier, it recognizes no petty custom-house restrictions."[23] Pennell's endorsement of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars was not without exception. In fact, she shared with other critics a sense of fatigue and boredom at

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the high number of imitative works--"de déplorables pastiches"--whose "deformation to gain a réclame at all hazards, no matter whether by prostitution of colour or debasement of methods, eventually leads to more offensive results."[24]

In spite of its absence from the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars, the work of Whistler was widely discussed; his impact was recognized as most significant in the works of younger foreign figure and portrait painters who, following Whistler's aesthetic agenda, gave priority to formal concerns. Although critical of the number of imitative works at the Salon, one reviewer praised the Nationale for its demonstration of the importance of Whistler: "The new Société's effort to establish the importance and reputation [of Whistler] before the great Parisian public has not been in vain."[25] Art historian and critic Louis De Fourcaud's (1851-1914) Salon reviews for Le Gaulois and Revue des Arts Décoratifs discussed Whistler's work, in particular what he called "le gris Whistler." De Fourcaud advised young artists to study Whistler's subtle variations of color and tone and his "harmonies de décoloration."[26]

Alexander exhibited three works as the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars, all full-length canvases of standing female figures. The titles, Portrait noir, Portrait gris, and Étude, underscored Alexander's aesthetic agenda and signalled his definitive departure from the more traditional

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portraiture he practiced in the 1880s. Like Whistler, Alexander subordinated the sitter's name in his titles to underscore the inversion of priorities from representation of an individual to decorative treatment of the figure. Moreover, the three paintings articulated Alexander's decorative vocabulary--formal simplicity, linear elegance, rigorous surface structure, adherence to pictorial rather than illustrative exigencies, and preoccupation with color harmonies of a single dominant tone--which would inform his artistic production throughout the 1890s.[27] Each work featured the same model (presumably Elizabeth Alexander who frequently posed for Alexander during this period), and concentrated on the flowing lines and curves of an unadorned gown. Alexander eliminated superfluous ornament and reduced the contrasting hues to occasional touches of color that enlivened the monochromatic palette. Details of the physiognomy of the face were minimized and subordinated to the decorative treatment of the figure and to concentration on a graceful silhouette.

In addition to establishing the aesthetic principles and decorative vocabulary that he would employ throughout the decade, Alexander's decisive turn away from traditional (male) portraiture--that is, once concerned with sitter identification and characterization--toward decorative figural studies of women was consistent with gender distinctions and the perceived role of women in the late

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nineteenth century. The transatlantic presence of women in decorative figural art, both in easel and mural painting, reflected the assumption by artists, male and female, that the use of female subjects was inevitable when the aim of the work was decorative. The female subject, in fact, functioned as a seemingly neutral pictorial motif within a decorative design; the figure could easily be anonymous and be manipulated as a formal element within the composition. In her study of the ideal woman in American art in the late nineteenth century, Bailey Van Hook writes:

> In the nineteenth century, men were perceived in terms of action; thus it was less possible for male figures to be decorative and passive than female figures. The dominant ideology of separate spheres granted men an active function outside the home in business and industry, government and politics . . . while women reigned over the home and cultural activities. . . . In addition, their [mens] individual identities and specific surroundings were not interchangeable, as was the case with female figures in the many compositions entitled Study in [ ].[28]

With respect to the seemingly inevitable choice of women as the subjects in decorative painting Van Hook concludes, "Since the essence of decorative came to mean the integration of the figure in an abstract play of lines, colors, and shapes, the figure could not be assertive or aggressive or assume an identity that would interfere with or break out of the decorative design."[29] The titles of Alexander's paintings, with the predominant tone of the work followed by the word "portrait," de-emphasized the identity of the model, underscoring the aesthetic motive of the

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paintings while subverting the traditional meaning of a portrait. Alexander's figure paintings from this period were usually uncommissioned works painted for exhibition.

In Portrait gris (fig. 30), also exhibited as La femme en gris and La dame en gris,[30] a full-length standing figure occupies most of the canvas and is shown in three-quarter view from the left rear. The pale silver satin blouse with a tightly fitted bodice and the silver sash at the waist contrast with the full, drier grey voluminous skirt that touches the floor. Three horizontal satin bands decorate the bottom of the skirt and form an undulating line that is echoed in the horizontal lines on the grey curtain which she stands in front of. The contrast of textures and the minimal range of grey tones are sure and confident. The woman's profile, though visible, is of less visual interest than her black hair, which is tied into a bun at the base of her neck, and provides a tonal contrast to the pale silvers and greys of the clothing and curtain. Although her posture is static, the flowing lines and fullness of the skirt activate the composition. The paint is applied thinly to reveal the canvas itself, which is of a very coarse, open weave, adding to the surface effect of the composition and animating the stretches of flat grey tones. The delicate harmonies of grey, or as De Fourcaud called them, "harmonies de décoloration," are alleviated by two areas of red: one in a flower in her hair; the other in a subtle band which makes

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a diagonal across the very shallow space on the floor, above which Alexander signed his name in the same tone.

Alexander's deliberate use of a coarse, absorbent canvas, which called attention to the surface of the picture as a flat plane, may be considered as part of the international decorative aesthetic of the time when artists with widely ranging aesthetic agenda and pictorial practices shifted the aim of painting away from naturalism to primarily decorative and formal concerns. Alexander's first tentative experiments with coarse canvas in the early 1880s (see fig. 3 for example) may relate to his exposure to advanced painting techniques in Polling in the late 1870s and a desire to adapt the bold, bravura brushwork, the signature "Munich look," to a more tonal palette. It is reasonable to suppose that Alexander was encouraged in his technical experiments by the example of Whistler's work, in particular his Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, which was painted on an unprepared back of a previously used canvas. Thin washes of paint in a low key palette were absorbed into the coarse canvas, thereby calling attention to the decorative, flat surface of the canvas while denying three-dimensional substance to the figure.[31] Whistler's painting technique, which underscored the formal rather than representational motive in his work, was adopted by other American artists as well, notably William Merritt Chase. Chase met Whistler in

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London in 1885 and shortly thereafter painted two works--Portrait of James McNeill Whistler (1885, MMA) and Study of a Young Girl, also known as At Her Ease (c. 1885, NAD)--which closely emulated Whistler's distinctive technique, that is the use of coarse absorbent canvas covered with thin washes of paint, and compositional formulae.[32]

Alexander's commitment to the use of coarse canvas as part of his decorative aesthetic came to the forefront during the 1890s. In fact, Alexander had his canvas made to order of a very coarse linen prepared to be highly absorbant. Elizabeth Alexander recalled, "He was very much disappointed with the canvas he got in Paris and he began making experiments making his own canvas and for a little time he used a very heavy jute. . . . Later in Paris he had his canvas made on a very heavy linen."[33] Alexander's technique was noted in the contemporary critical press and was discussed with respect to the impact of Whistler on figure and portrait painters. For example, the term "les portraitistes-tapisserus" was coined by French critic Louis De Fourcaud to refer to a group of artists, all of whom were members of the Société Naitonale des Beaux-Arts and included Alexander, Edmond Aman-Jean, Antonio de la Gandara, and Ary Renan, whose use of coarse canvas was borrowed from Whistler and suggested flat, decorative pieces of fabric.[34] Alexander continued to use coarse, absorbent canvas throughout his career although it was during the 1890s that

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this technique was most widely discussed and aesthetically current.[35]

In discussing the pictorial and decorative value of Portrait gris Caffin said, "In a human way, it does not attract or interest us. Its great merit is that it offers a signal example of the applied principles of line and tone and lighting which has occupied the study of artists so much during the last half century."[36] Caffin later identified this work as the first complete pictorial expression of Alexander's decorative style with its characteristic sweep of line animated by voluminous, balloon-like skirts.[37] Portrait, c. 1893 (fig. 31), a related work, may have been one of Alexander's submissions to the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars. Here, a woman in shown standing in a shallow pictorial space. The flowing lines of her ample gown, particularly at its edge, contrast with the angularity of the cutoff picture frame behind the figure's head.

Alexander's debut at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars could not have been more timely. Critics had already favorably responded to the impact of Whistler and to decorative figure painting as significant features of the Nationale's annual Salons. Indeed, Alexander's work was discussed in relation to that of a circle of younger figure and portrait painters--Edmond Aman-Jean (1858-1936), Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861-1942), and Ary Renan (1857/8-1900) among the French, and Anders Zorn (1860-1920), Antonio de la Gandara (1862-1917),

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James Guthrie (1859-1930), and John Lavery (1856-1941), among the foreigners--whose works were considered, to varying degrees, decorative, Whistlerian, or both.[38] In fact, the two terms were often used interchangeably to denote work that emphasized formal rather than interpretive or narrative qualities.

The critical alignment of Alexander's work with that by many of the younger figure and portrait painters was not gratuitous. In fact, the paintings Alexander exhibited at his Salon debut in 1893 bore many stylistic and aesthetic parallels with these artists' works with which Alexander would have certainly been familiar from the two previous Nationale Salons. The French artists Albert Besnard, Edmond Aman-Jean, and Jacques-Émile Blanche had exhibited at the 1891 and 1892 Salons du Champ-de-Mars and worked in a decorative figural mode that depicted a solitary woman in an elegant flowing gown. Paintings such as Besnard's Portrait de Mlle M. de J. (1892) and Aman-Jean's Mlle T. C. J. (1892, MdO), for example, were exhibited at the 1892 Salon du Champ-de-Mars and it is reasonable to assume would have been familiar to Alexander. In each work the identity of the figure is subordinate. The artist concentrates instead on the elegant and decorative arrangement of the figure within a very shallow compositional space: in the former the figure is standing and shown in three quarter view from the rear (not unlike the pose of Alexander's Portrait gris of the

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following year); in the latter the figure is seated and shown in profile, suggesting a debt to Whistler's compositional formula.[39] Portrait de Mme XXX (1892) by fellow American expatriate William T. Dannat (1859-1929) was also exhibited at the 1892 Salon du Champ-de-Mars and would have likely been familiar to Alexander. In this painting, a standing figure is shown from the rear; her head turns to the right and is seen in profile. The elegant flowing line of the gown and the isolation of the figure within a shallow pictorial space recalls the pictorial strategies of Dannat's La femme en rouge (1889, MdO), which he exhibited at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris with great success. The painting was subsequently purchased by the French government for the Musée du Luxembourg in 1894.[40]

H. Barbara Weinberg points out that Dannat's La femme en rouge

> appears more directly indebted to works by Sargent than to any other master. The long intensely red gown recalls Sargent's Dr. Pozzi at Home (1881, The Armond Hammer Foundation, Los Angeles, California); the contrast of striking profile to dark background and the inclusion of the mirror, a symbol of vanity, respond to the form and make overt the content of Sargent's Mme. Gautreau (1884, MMA), the succès de scandale of the 1884 Salon.[41]

Pictorial parallels with Sargent's Mme. Gautreau may be seen in Alexander's Portrait gris as well, in particular in the isolation of the figure against a plain background, the somewhat haughty pose, and the crisp, sinuous outline following the curves of the woman's form and her flowing

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gown. It is reasonable to assume that Alexander was familiar with Sargent's work from the 1880s as it was regularly discussed and reproduced in the contemporary press.[42]

De Fourcaud's critical discussion of Alexander's Whistlerian manner in Portrait gris emphasized the inherently decorative motive in Alexander's work and what he called "une certaine allure de tapisserie." He said:

> Decorative portraiture is based on the formula of "harmonies"--that is, tone on tone applied very delicately. This decorative formula belongs to Whistler, but it is borrowed extensively by foreign artists. Mr. John Alexander--an American--is inspired by his method. He exhibits three large figures of women at the Champ-de-Mars, painted on coarse canvas and with very dry paint. . . . Here there is no search for personality; rather for carefully considered harmonies; the poses are very simple and give the works a quality of tapestry.[43]

Elizabeth Pennell proclaimed Alexander's triumph at the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars as rivaled only by that of Aman-Jean, and was unrestrained in her enthusiasm:

> Portraits that compel attention . . . are, above all, by Mr. Alexander, an American. It is the latter who carries off the honors. Faults may be pointed out in his three contributions. . . . But there is a style in the pose, a dignity in the lines, a delicacy in the tones of his woman in grey . . . which reveal him to be not merely a skilled workman, but the inspired artist."[44]

The success of Alexander's Parisian debut can be measured not only by critical approbation but by his unanimous election to the title of Associé of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in late May at the Nationale's

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first meeting after the opening of its 1893 Salon.[45] Even before the Salon opened, Alexander had received valued approval and encouragement from his colleagues Roll, the vice-president of the Nationale, and Whistler who, as Elizabeth Alexander later recalled, introduced Alexander to several critics and remarked, "You will see work by Alexander at the Salon this year and I am sure you will be interested."[46]

The stunning success of Alexander's Parisian debut initiated a period of intense artistic activity. Moreover, the success translated into commissions on both sides of the Atlantic. Alexander's enthusiasm could not be restrained in a letter from 1893, written in Seabright, New Jersey, where the Alexanders spent the summer. He wrote:

> My plans are not yet clearly settled but I have taken passage for September 30 and may remain abroad this time for several years. . . . I am not burning all my bridges on this side but I want to settle in Paris. . . . This last season I made the hit of the year in the Salon - but I was a new man and a new sensation - and next year I may fall flat. If I can keep up the interest, I remain - and I give it one more year of trial. I can say that the prospects are very bright - and the two years that I have been away - though two-thirds of the time I was not strong enough to work - have made a wonderful change in my position in this country. From one man I have commissions for five portraits if I will come back next year to paint them.[47]

During this summer Alexander worked on several portrait commissions, including those of Mr. Mosenthal (fig. 32), the musical director of the Mendelssohn Glee Club, Chief Justice

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Beasley of New Jersey, Marcelius Hartley, and James Alexander, Alexander's father-in-law.[48]

Any sense of caution on the part of Alexander or the critics as to whether this new talent could sustain his vigor and level of excellence was dispelled in 1894. Alexander's activities accelerated at a dizzying pace including participating in exhibitions in Paris, London, New York, and Chicago. In early spring of 1894, Alexander exhibited Portrait gris, and another work titled Portrait, at the Grafton Gallery in London. The paintings were well received and discussed with the work of Whistler and young Spanish artist Antonio de la Gandara, in particular de la Gandara's Dame en vert (1893, exhibited at the Nationale's Salon of that year) which depicted an elegantly gowned woman, shown from the rear, standing in a shallow pictorial space.[49]

The Grafton Gallery inaugurated a series of international exhibitions of contemporary art in the spring of 1893 which paralleled the Nationale's Salons, albeit on a smaller scale, in artistic liberality and hospitality to foreign artists. Moreover, many of the artists who exhibited at the Grafton Gallery were active members of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts including Whistler, Gari Melchers, Jacques-Émile Blanche, and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). In reviewing its inaugural exhibition, Elizabeth Pennell referred to the Grafton Gallery as "an English

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understudy, as it were, of the Palais des Beaux-Arts. Indeed, so closely has the Champ-de-Mars been followed that Americans, hitherto unrepresented in London, have been included among the foreign exhibitors."[50]

Alexander's confidence grew steadily, bolstered by critical approbation in the French, English, and American press. Throughout the winter of 1893-94, he painted several figure studies of women and at least two portraits of fellow male artists, Fritz Thaulow and Ivan Pranishnikoff. With the distinction of the title Associé, Alexander exhibited seven works at the 1894 Salon du Champ-de-Mars which opened April 25. This was the largest of the Nationale's exhibitions to date, featuring 1201 paintings.

In addition to citing the predominance of decorative figure paintings and portraits of women as a significant feature of the Salon, "l'invasion étrangère" continued to be widely discussed in the critical press. One English writer expressed a sense of menace at the prospect of the steadily increasing number of foreign exhibitors: "Everywhere the stranger is knocking at the doors, knocking incessantly . . . and moreover, steadily coming nearer and nearer, so that soon even the inner chambers will be inviolate no longer."[51] Other critics found the fifth annual Salon du Champ-de-Mars an expression of an unfulfilled promise of artistic progress: "the [Nationale] is not progressing and remains stationary; this time [the Salon du Champ-de-Mars]

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does not present to the French art world an innovative or definitive style which it has come to expect."[52] Others found the prevailing tendency of innovation for its own sake lacking conviction on the part of the Nationale, which seemed to encourage "l'anarchie de l'art."[53] De Fourcaud continued his examination of the impact of Whistler on foreign figure and portrait painters whose works he called "des portraits-tapisseurs." He declared, "The preference for tonal painting is widespread and is the result of several causes. During the last years, monochromatic painting has prevailed, particularly in decorative work. . . . In painting, the cult of anemia and fog have triumphed."[54]

Alexander submitted five figure paintings of women--three simply titled Portrait, and two subject pictures, La glace and Le piano--and two portraits of fellow male artists, Fritz Thaulow and Ivan Pranishnikoff to the Nationale's Salon in 1894.[55] Such an ambitious display of seven large-scale paintings demonstrated Alexander's vigorous artistic activity following his Salon debut in 1893. Moreover, the range of subjects--figure paintings of women, subject pictures, and male portraits--may have reflected Alexander's desire to quell any suspicion about the depth or the range of his talent. Finally, it was in his paintings of women, largely uncommissioned, non-portrait works, that Alexander clearly articulated his decorative

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style which utilized elegant flowing lines, a limited tonal palette, and calculated pictorial structure. From this point forward in his career, the refinement of Alexander's decorative style would be directly associated with images of women, in both portraits and figure paintings. Although Alexander continued to paint commissioned portraits of men throughout the decade, they bore little imprint of his decorative style. Moreover, male portraiture accounted for relatively little of Alexander's production throughout his expatriate years.

During the 1890s Alexander's patronage and livelihood came principally from male portrait commissions which he painted during periodic trips to the United States. Elizabeth Alexander recalled, "We used to come home every other year and stay a month or two because [John] did portraits and he was getting more and more commissions."[56] Although Alexander did receive three important commissions from European patrons during the decade[57], the majority of his works in the 1890s were uncommissioned paintings of women. Although some of these paintings entered private and public collections--Devant la glace (fig. 42) was purchased by James Cowan in 1894, the year it was exhibited at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars; Isabella and the Pot of Basil (fig. 57) was purchased in 1897 by Ernest Longfellow for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; Portrait gris (fig, 30) was purchased for the Musée du Luxembourg in 1898--most of the

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works remained in Alexander's collection, notably Repose (fig. 38) and A Ray of Sunlight (fig. 67). Given Alexander's renown and the critical acclaim his work generated, it is surprising that relatively few of Alexander's paintings were sold during this period. It is possible that the apparent lack of vigorous patronage for these uncommissioned works was the result of Alexander's desire to have a substantial body of work available for display at various international exhibitions. In fact, Alexander regularly exhibited the same painting at more than one exhibition. Moreover, as Alexander's financial needs appeared to have been met by the portrait commissions he recieved during the decade, there was no urgency to stimulate patronage.

Alexander's submissions to the 1894 Nationale Salon were singled out as among the finest works exhibited, attesting to the international currency and the viability of his decorative style.[58] Alexander's subsequent unanimous election to the title of Sociétaire, the most distinguished title for non-founding members of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, was a definitive signal by his professional colleagues of what had already been articulated in the critical press: Alexander was eminent within an international circle of artists in Paris in the 1890s.[59]

Of the three works entitled Portrait, the one reproduced in the Nationale's catalogue is a portrait of

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Elizabeth Alexander (also exhibited with the title Changeable Taffeta and Portrait of Mrs. Alexander) (fig. 33). The full-length figure stands between a column and a colonial revival armchair. Her posture is similar to that in Portrait gris although here her neck is twisted so that the face is in three-quarter view. As in the paintings Alexander exhibited in 1893, the dress is the ostensible "subject" of the painting. In this work, the taffeta dress in pale tints of opal, with a voluminous, billowing skirt, occupies nearly half of the canvas. A lively linear pattern is created by the sweeping, undulating lines of the gown in contrast to the slender proportions and the verticality of the armchair. The pose, with the exaggerated twist of the neck, is somewhat awkward and detracts from the composition as it draws attention to the details of the face, whose proportions are dwarfed by the massive dress. Moreover, the column and chair, although certainly intended to compliment the composition pictorially, seem unnecessary and distracting elements.

The portrait of Mrs. Bartlett (fig. 34), wife of the American sculptor Paul Wayland Bartlett (1865-1925), exhibited as Portrait as well, is another full-length figure shown in three-quarter view from the front with her gaze directed at the viewer. Again, it is the gown that occupies most of the canvas and is its principal pictorial form; here it is an eloquent study in blacks. The strict tonal control

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is relieved by the purple sash and black beads that extend to the floor, and their languorous curve parallels the gentle s-curve created by the gown. The décolletage provides another visual accent as Mrs. Bartlett's ivory skin tone contrasts sharply with the black gown, creating a crisp, curving line that is echoed in the curve of the gown at the floor. An eloquent balance of decorative and representational motives distinguishes this painting. It was this skill that assured Alexander of numerous portrait commissions in the future.

Alexander's portraits of Fritz Thaulow and Ivan Pranishnikoff demonstrated his continued interest in male portraiture that had formed the cornerstone of his artistic production in the 1880s, and were singled out by some critics as evidence of Alexander's dexterity in portraits of men as well as women.[60] Unlike the more detailed and representational portrait of Pranishnikoff which depicts the artist in his studio,[61] the portrait of Thaulow (fig. 35) is more deliberately decorative and concentrates on the pictorial arrangement of the form, subordinating allusions to Thaulow's profession or a straightforward depiction of character. The three-quarter view portrait shows Thaulow seated in profile. As in numerous earlier male portraits, Alexander highlights the white collar and the cuffs of the shirt against a black coat for their pictorial value. The background elements are minimal and compliment the pictorial

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structure. Thaulow is seated in front of a screen whose carved s-curves enliven the surface design while their slender elegance contrasts with Thaulow's massive form. The intrusion of decorative concerns in the portrait of Thaulow, at the expense of direct delineation of character, was unusual in Alexander's male portraits and would not be repeated.

Le piano (fig. 36) was Alexander's most ambitious composition to date. While it is possible that this was a commissioned portrait of the singer Helen Hopekirk, Alexander avoided concessions to traditional portraiture. The individuality of the sitter is submerged within the composition which relies on the exaggerated curve of the piano for its appeal and its pictorial armature. Moreover, Helen Hopekirk, seen from the rear, is pushed to the far left side of the canvas while another seated figure is barely visible at the edge of the canvas. A large vase rests at the edge of the piano, drawing attention to the empty space behind it. Although the languid curve of the billowing skirt parallels that of the piano, the gown is a subordinate element in the composition. This is atypical for Alexander during this period. The title of the work further dilutes any reference to portraiture. Le piano has certain pictorial parallels with Dewing's painting of the same theme, The Piano (1891, FGA), which Alexander may have been familiar with. In both works, the figure's identity is

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submerged; the figure acts as an ostensibly neutral decorative element in the pictorial design. In Alexander's work, the elegant curve of the grand piano is emphasized, drawing attention to its obvious visual parallels with the female form.

Le piano signalled Alexander's pictorial investigations into the theme of music. Throughout the decade, Alexander painted several images of women with musical instruments which were self-consciously aesthetic and dictated by principles of decorative design. Moreover, they evoked an analogy between music and painting so frequently cited by the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), Whistler, and other proponents of art for art's sake. The theme of women and music was essayed by numerous artists with varying aesthetic agendas and practices during this period including Cassatt, Dewing, Eakins, Sargent, Degas, Whistler, J. Alden Weir, and Manet.

Panel for Music Room (fig. 37), probably painted in Etrétat in the summer of 1894,[62] is another ambitious two-figure composition on the theme of women and music, although it is more consonant with the decorative figure style articulated by Alexander in 1893 than is Le piano.[63] A woman (probably Elizabeth Alexander), shown in two different poses, is seated on a banquette that extends the width of the painting. In one pose the figure is seated holding a guitar; in the other, the figure semi-reclines with her head

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resting on her hand. The calculated pictorial structure is composed of a rhythmic network of horizontal, vertical, and sinuous lines, creating an elegant surface pattern. The exaggerated horizontal format is one that Alexander used tentatively in one of his earliest large-scale experiments in aesthetic portraiture, Miss Abbe, 1885. Here, it is a deliberate compositional strategy and it enhances the frieze-like arrangement of forms across the surface. The shallow pictorial space is dominated by the two gowns, whose sinuous, swelling curves have obvious parallels to the female form and contrast with the regularity of the vertical linear patterning on the banquette. The austere tonal palette of muted pinks and greens is enlivened with accents of dark green, grey, and red, as in the pillow on which the semi-reclining figure rests.

Many likely pictorial precedents may be cited for Panel for Music Room, notably Whistler's Symphony in White, No. 3 (1867, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, England), which may have been influenced by Albert Moore's The Marble Seat (1865), Dewing's The Garden, also known as Autumn (1883, MFAB), J. Alden Weir's Idle Hours (1888, MMA), and Albert Moore's Beads (1875, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, England).[64] In each example, two young women are depicted in a shallow pictorial space, reclining on or around a sofa which extends horizontally to the edges of the canvas.

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Contrasting linear patterns and ornamental elements such as jars, fans, pillows, and vases with flowering branches distinguish these compositions, while the palette in each is dominated by a single pale tone. The broadly classical drapery in Moore's and Dewing's paintings contrasts with the decidedly modern dress in Whistler's and Weir's paintings, yet in each, the drapery enhances the decorative arrangement of the figures in a rigorously structured pictorial space. Subject matter is of little or no concern.

Alexander exploited the decorative potential of the reclining figure dressed in a flowing, voluminous gown within a shallow, structured pictorial space repeatedly during the next two years. In fact, five of his ten submissions to the 1895 Salon du Champ-de-Mars were variations on this compositional strategy. Although Panel for Music Room is more ambitious than Alexander's typical single figure subjects, it demonstrated Alexander's command of an expanded repertory of decorative motifs and poses. Many variations of this theme and the pictorial device of a woman dressed in a voluminous gown, whose voluptuous curves created a network of elegant flowing lines across a two-dimensional surface of subtly modulated tones, distinguished Alexander's finest paintings in the 1890s.

Nine of the paintings that Alexander exhibited at the 1893 and 1894 Salon du Champ-de-Mars were exhibited in the late fall of 1894 at the Chicago Art Institute's Seventh

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Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Artists.[65] These annual exhibitions at the Art Institute began in 1888 and reflected the current internationalism of American art. Moreover, the exhibition's internationalist agenda paralleled that of many exhibitions in Europe and America in the 1880s and 1890s. The display of works by American artists living abroad or trained in Europe was a regular and important feature of the Chicago exhibitions. The preface to the 1894 exhibition catalogue made this agenda clear:

> The conservative, the progressive, and the advanced radical schools of modern art are all well exemplified in the collection represented by the following catalogue. Although the contributors are all citizens of the United States . . . the influence of Paris is plainly dominant, even in the works of many of our artists who have never seen that city.[66]

Sixty two paintings in the exhibition were by American artists living in Paris including William Dannat, Walter Gay, Alexander Harrison, John Humphreys-Johnston, many of whom participated, as Alexander did, in the Nationale's Salons.[67] Although Alexander work was known in the United States, this was the first American display of his Parisian paintings in which he fully articulated his decorative style.

In the spring of 1895, Alexander participated in an exhibition of the Société Internationale de Peinture et Sculpture held at the Galeries Georges Petit, Paris. He exhibited four works, all entitled Étude; three were figure

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paintings of women and one was a landscape.[68] The list of exhibitors, all of whom were cited as Sociétaires in the exhibition catalogue, included several of Alexander's colleagues at the Nationale--Aman-Jean, Le Sidaner, Thaulow, Humphreys-Johnston, and Whistler, among others--as well as some of the luminaries from the Société des Artistes Français, notably Georges Rochegrosse (1859-1938), whose elaborate and often violent imagery depicted in hallucinatory realistic detail could scarcely be overlooked by the Salon visitor.

In spite of the appellation "Société Internationale," the organization was neither international nor the effort of any organized artists society. One critic remarked that in contrast to the decidedly international exhibitions at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, "The Société Internationale has only eight foreigners among its forty members."[69] The Société Internationale was, in effect, a group of eminent and critically acclaimed artists selected by gallery owner Georges Petit for commercial exhibitions. Petit began this enterprise in 1882; the exhibitions continued through the 1890s.[70] Petit's embrace of Alexander's work in this eminently "marketable" group of artists was another demonstration of Alexander's vast popularity and of the international currency of his decorative figure style.[71]

The 1895 Salon du Champ-de-Mars was the largest to date with 1274 paintings. Of the foreign displays at the sixth

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annual Salon, the American was the largest. Although Whistler and Sargent did not exhibit works this year, the roster of annual American exhibitors included Alexander, Dannat, Harrison, Melchers, and Nourse and was supplemented with the initial submissions by Edward Rook (1870-1960), George W. Maynard (1843-1923), Lilla Cabot Perry (1848-1933), and Thomas Wilmer Dewing. Moreover, there was a special exhibition of 230 watercolors of Samoa and Fiji by John La Farge.

Critical reception of the 1895 Salon was largely unchanged from the year before. Many writers found much to praise while a few found a great deal to reprove. The importance of the Nationale's display of decorative arts continued to be discussed as was the increasing presence of foreign artists. One critic insisted that the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts should be more accurately referred to as the "Internationale" and wrote, "The Société Nationale's exhibitions are primarily international. Out of 400 exhibitors listed in the catalogue's section of painting, 175 belong to the other nations of the world. The proportion is significant."[72] Another critic was compelled to divide his discussion between the French and "l'étranger," whom he feared threatened to overrun the Salon.[73] Elizabeth Pennell, on the other hand, continued her spirited defense of the pronounced presence of foreign work at the Salon and insisted:

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> If this had not been so, the Salon would have rejoiced in no greater a distinction than the annual exhibitions in other less liberal lands. It is to the foreigner they owe their fame among nations, so that it is not merely unreasonable, but ungrateful for the critic now to grow restive under the foreign yoke.[74]

The Nationale's display of advanced tendencies in art, which carried a tone of independence and youth, as compared with the more retardataire academic display at the Salon du Champs-Élysées, was widely noted in the critical press. For example, one critic remarked, "The Champ-de-Mars, in general, professes the doctrine of art for art's sake."[75] Another critic alerted the public to the primacy of technique and of principles of decorative design as characteristic of the "New Salon." He concluded, "It [Salon du Champ-de-Mars] is full of suggestion and might serve to illustrate an exhaustive monograph on the art of the last days of the nineteenth century at its best and perhaps--to be quite frank--at its worst."[76] As in previous Salons, portrait and figure studies of women abounded, particularly by the younger artists who were singled out annually for critical discussion. They included Aman-Jean, de la Gandara, Renan, Lavery, Humphreys-Johnston, and Guthrie. The durable influence of Whistler on this group of artists continued to be widely discussed as well.[77] Alexander's association with these artists and his aesthetic parallels with Whistler dominated critical discussion of his submissions to the 1895 Salon.

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Alexander's display at the 1895 Salon du Champ-de-Mars was his largest to date: ten paintings, many of which were painted the summer before in Etrétat. Of the ten paintings exhibited, four featured women reclining on a divan. In each a billowing gown dominates the composition and directs the flow of the linear pattern. Of the four, the most often discussed and the most expressive of Alexander's mature decorative style was Repos (fig. 38) (often exhibited with the English spelling Repose), painted in the spring of 1895 in Paris.[78] The characteristic sweeping line, simplification of form through reduction of incident, limited tonal palette, coarse canvas, and rigorous pictorial structure distinguish this full-length painting of a woman, probably Elizabeth Alexander, in a flowing white gown. The figure reclines on an overstuffed divan; the red tones of the pillows contrast with the pale gown. The back of the divan is draped with a subtly patterned dark cloth, and creates a crisp, upward curving line against the flat, dull gold background, in contrast to the downward curving horizontal axis of the figure. The body twists at the waist, accentuating the voluptuous curve of her buttock and thigh, while the pose is further elongated by the raised right arm. Alexander manipulates the dress to accentuate the curves of the form; the black satin trim enhances the flowing lines as it follows the contours of her body. The

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woman's face is turned and gazes at the viewer suggestively with parted lips and half-closed eyelids.

Such a provocative engagement with the viewer is unusual in Alexander's work, as is the painting's deliberate, if restrained, sensuality. Charles Caffin described this element of sensuality in Alexander's work as "discreet voluptuousness," and he assured his readers, "This sensuous suggestion [is] limited, it should be observed, entirely to the abstract aesthetic impression aroused by the composition, and not at all reflected in the sentiment of the subject."[79] Caffin's disclaimer and negation of any overt meaning, erotic or otherwise, in Alexander's "discreetly voluptuous" works was consistent with critical discussions of female imagery from the period which dismissed content and emphasized formal and decorative qualities. Nonetheless, the languorous, eroticized mood of Repos was a pronounced element in the work. Moreover, this mood was closely allied with the tone of many works in the 1890s that were informed by Symbolism to varying degrees and portrayed women in numerous guises from passive, to beguiler, to victim, to murderess. The deliberate use of a horizontal pose, which had historically signified sexual availability, suggested a degree of intimacy between the figure and the artist/viewer. Moreover, the horizontal pose alluded to the woman's passivity and lassitude; the figure's only "function" is as a decorative object for contemplation.

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The tension established between the figure's passivity and her alertness added to the painting's sensual implications. Her direct gaze rendered more explicit the suggestion of a viewer for whom she was voluptuously displayed. The gown's white color itself had overtones of the erotic. The white did not merely suggest purity but brought to mind lingerie and the intimacies of the bedroom. A possible pictorial reference for the suggestive use of a white gown may be Whistler's Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl (1862, NGA), where the allusion to eroticism is pronounced.[80] Although Alexander would abandon suggestively erotic or decadent subject matter after his repatriation in 1901, his works in the 1890s demonstrated his responsiveness to internationally current styles and ideas informed by Symbolism. Two years later he would paint his most self-consciously symbolist work, Isabella and the Pot of Basil (fig. 57).

In his study of images of women at the turn of the twentieth century, Bram Dijkstra refers to "the nymph with the broken back" as a generic category of female imagery in which her posture is distorted and exaggerated to underscore her erotic potential and availability. Perhaps the best-known example of such imagery is Alexandre Cabanel's (1823-1889) succès de scandale of 1863 The Birth of Venus (1863,MdO) which, as Dijkstra notes:

> in its own way revolutionized the representation of this theme by having Venus rise out of the wave

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> not standing upright and in control of things, as in Botticelli's famous version, but by having her seem to have floated to the surface from the ocean floor in a conveniently horizontal position. . . . In addition to exhibiting the lassitude characteristic of a collapsing woman, Cabanel's Venus has landed more than flat on her back. A convenient wave has come along to push up her midriff until there clearly is a considerable strain upon her spinal column. . . . Cabanel has broken new stylistic ground--as well as his model's back, to be sure.[81]

The erotic appeal of Cabanel's painting was exaggerated by Venus's upraised arm which further elongated the voluptuous figure and drew attention to her suggestive gaze, partially concealed under her raised arm. Although the figure in Alexander's Repos is turned onto her front side and is fully clothed, the arched pose exaggerates the sensual appeal of the displayed woman as does her provocative engagement with the viewer through half-closed eyes.

Alethea (fig. 39), painted in the spring of 1895, was the second of the full-length figures reclining on a divan, and depicts a woman (again probably Elizabeth Alexander) ostensibly reading, although she looks away from the book and seems lost in contemplation. Less insistently horizontal than Repos, the figure is surrounded by a swirling, massive garment of muted dark blue and green which is animated by a series of vigorous curves which have little relation to the figure beneath it. Two black satin bands create elegant flowing lines as they follow the contours and folds of the gown to the edge of the canvas. The rectilinearity of the base of the sofa, seen in the lower

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right corner, contrasts with the undulating gown. Swirling arabesque motifs on the sofa and its overstuffed pillows, on the other hand, enhance the sequence of curves which play across the two-dimensional surface of the painting with little attempt to reveal the vital presence of the figure. The décolletage adds a visual accent to the dominant somber tones and creates an elegant flowing line from the edge of her right hand, which rests awkwardly behind her, through the exposed shoulder and elongated arched neck. Her face is shown in profile with parted lips, adding to the sense of chastened sensuality. Her hair, gathered in a bun at the base of her neck, blends into the indefinite, dark background. Alexander's willful manipulation of the female figure and her gown for decorative effect in Alethea is paralleled in Repos. In each work, the woman is decoratively displayed for visual delectation, although the eroticism of the former is more subdued.

The motif of women reading occurred with formulaic regularity in works by countless artists during this period and reinforced the traditional association of women with interiors and domesticity. Moreover, such imagery underscored women's lack of active participation in contemporary life; she is rather isolated and removed. This motif can be traced historically to seventeenth-century genre painting although it took on added meaning in the late nineteenth century as it reinforced dominant attitudes about

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women's passivity and exclusive association with the home, in spite of the rapid transformations taking place in society. Alexander essayed the motif of women reading many times throughout his career, in each work manipulating the figure and her gown for decorative effect. In her study of the Boston school's images of women at the turn of the twentieth century, Bernice Leader argues that images of isolated women in interiors--reading, sewing, or lost in contemplation--were anti-feminist in motive and intention and demonstrated the desire to maintain control over women's lives. She writes:

> As a rule, the Boston painters' feminine ideals seem old-fashioned and anachronistic when compared with contemporary descriptions of active, activist and modern women. The quietist mood and domestic subjects they prefer seem to be an attempt to make time stand still and to maintain the old established order during a period of rapid change.[82]

Whether or not such images were purposely anti-feminist, the ubiquity of paintings of isolated women in interiors at the turn of the century attests to widely held assumptions about the role of women in art and society.

Alexander explored the theme of a woman reclining on a divan in two smaller paintings, both entitled Étude and painted in Etrétat in the summer of 1894. One of them was alternately exhibited with the title Woman in Red, Study in Red, and Woman in Red on Divan (fig. 40).[83] In each work, the figure is shown leaning against the back of a divan, much like the one in Panel for Music Room, and dressed in a

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massive swirling gown which contrasts with the flat horizontality of the divan.[84]

The third full-length figure painting, Panneau, also exhibited with the title Portrait of a Lady, Girl in Yellow in Sunlight, and In the Orchard[85] (fig. 41), was painted in Etrétat in the summer of 1894 and features a figure standing in a landscape. She fills the narrow panel from top to bottom while the landscape behind her becomes a flat pattern of green. Against this is contrasted her yellowish-pink gown, decorated with lavender flowers and a green sash at the waist. A streak of fading sunlight forms a receding curve in the upper left corner of the canvas which is reinforced pictorially by the figure's posture; her head is turned down and she wears a golden band in her dark hair. The gown was surely one of Alexander's favorites of that summer as it was featured in Panel for Music Room and in one of the works entitled Étude.[86]

A figure in the landscape was quite rare in Alexander's oeuvre in the 1890s as his decorative ensembles usually relied on sparse interior spaces constructed to enhance the pose of the figure within a two-dimensional pictorial structure. His choice of twilight, however, lent a pale even tone to the composition not unlike his more typical interior views. Moreover, this was the first painting in which Alexander utilized a narrow vertical panel, which further emphasized the decorative quality of the work. This

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format proved a very useful one for Alexander and he utilized it repeatedly and deliberately. In Isabella and the Pot of Basil, 1897 (fig. 57), for example, Alexander exploited the format of the canvas to enhance the sinuous, flowing line of Isabella's gown and to exaggerate the overall decorative effect of the composition.

The fourth full-length figure, Devant la glace, also exhibited as The Mirror (fig. 42), was painted in Etrétat in the summer of 1894 and features a woman in the same dress as Panneau. With her back to the viewer, she seems to gazes in a mirror although her reflection is in shadow. The horizontality of the divan which she stands before, and the regularity of the pattern of the tile floor, contrast with the sweeping lines of her gown. Alexander essayed the theme of a woman gazing into a mirror at least five times during the decade. In Fancy Dress and Reflection, painted in 1894-95 (figs. 43 and 44), the woman's gaze is directed away from the viewer and her reflection is in shadow in the mirror. The mirror itself acts as an abstract element in the pictorial structure; its angular edges contrast with the flowing lines of the women's gowns.[87] Pictorially, the mirror created a tension between the flat surface of the canvas, which the mirror emulated, and the suggestion of deeper three-dimensional space in the mirror's reflection.

The motif of a woman gazing into a mirror had been depicted throughout the history of art to represent the

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traditional association of women with the sin of vanity and narcissistic self-contemplation. At the same time, as Bailey Van Hook points out, "the theme of women observing themselves also made manifest the relationship between viewer and object that exists when a painting is observed. The figures mimic the action of the viewer and call attention to the purpose of the painting."[88] Velázquez's The Toilet of Venus (c. 1651, National Gallery, London) is a classic example of this iconographic tradition: Venus, self-absorbed, contemplates her reflection in the mirror; her nude figure is voluptuously offered for the gaze of the viewer. During the decades immediately surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, the depiction of a woman gazing into a mirror was prevalent among artists with widely ranging aesthetic agendas and practices. The theme of women absorbed in self-contemplation was particularly suited to symbolist works which emphasized states of mind and emotions rather than the visible world. Women and mirrors appeared in numerous decorative figure paintings by both European and American artists of the period; the figure and the mirror functioned as decorative objects within the composition. Examples of such work include: William Merritt Chase's The Mirror (c. 1883, private collection and c. 1900, Cincinnati Art Museum); William Dannat's La femme en rouge (1889, MdO); Thomas Wilmer Dewing's The Mirror (n.d., FGA); Edmond Aman-

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Jean's Portrait (1894); Ary Renan's La phalene (1895); and J. Alden Weir's Reflections (1896, RISD).

Bram Dijkstra's discussion of women and mirrors in the art of this period focuses on ideology and assumptions about women as imitative and reflective, not creative or originative. The mirror itself functioned as a pictorial analogue for women's nature as it was widely understood at the time: imitative, circular, and reflective. He writes:

> It is no wonder that the moon had come to stand for the essence of everything that was truly feminine in the world. The moon too, after all, existed only as a "reflected entity." It had no light of its own, just as woman, in her proper function, had existence only as the passive reflection of male creativity. The sun was Apollo, the god of light, the moon, Diana, the pale echo in the night. As usual, the late nineteenth century adapted elements of classical mythology in a manner which . . . perfectly suited the symbolic relationships expressive of its contemporary cultural ideology.[89]

In works such as Mary Cassatt's Mother and Child (c. 1905, NGA) and Robert Reid's The Violet Kimono (1910, NMAA), the mirror takes on additional psychological meaning. In the creation of an endless and hermetically sealed pattern of reduplication, the mirror, as Dijkstra notes, "serves as a window into the closed room of their [women's] lives" and symbolizes the apparently inescapable confinement of women within the interior domestic sphere.[90]

Alexander's works were roundly approved by critics who found his efforts equal to the best of those of his French and foreign colleagues. One critic praised his "complete

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mastery of line and silhouette." Another declared Alexander had found the secret of Whistler.[91] Such approbation notwithstanding, some critics found that Alexander's exploitation of a voluminous, billowing gown for decorative effect bordered on the eccentric. Elizabeth Pennell's remarks characterized much of this concern:

> Mr. Alexander is also once more to the fore, but his new portraits tend somewhat too much to the eccentric. There is one in particular, of a woman in voluminous blue skirts, out-spreading as if by an over-exaggerated crinoline or blown about by a small hurricane, in which he seems to be challenging astonishment. It is clever, no doubt, but lacks the repose and dignity which hitherto have characterized his canvases.[92]

Dismay at Alexander's extravagant poses and arrangements was expressed by others who found "les vastes jupes" bizarre and the figures contorted while his display of cleverness seemed to border on affectation.[93]

Repos was singled out as Alexander's most remarkable study of silhouette and sinuous, stylized line. Its elegant reduction of form to undulating linear rhythms had obvious parallels to art nouveau, a term taken from the name of a shop which German dealer Siegfried Bing (1838-1905) opened in Paris in 1895 to sell decorative wares from Japan and to display works by contemporary artists.[94] However, the exploitation of a swirling elongated line to abstract three-dimensional form into an undulating surface pattern was not limited to so-called art nouveau stylization but was part of a pervasive and international current toward decorative

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simplification and two-dimensional treatment of form that cut across various media and was used by artists with widely diverging methods and aesthetic agendas.[95] The range of works in which art nouveau manifested itself was as diverse as the individual personalities involved and make it difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a simple definition of the style. Moreover, the internationalism of this trend was reflected in the various names used to describe it--Jugendstil, Secessionstil, l'Art Nouveau, l'Art Moderne, and Modern Style. Alexander's willful exploitation of line and flat areas of color in works such as Repos reflect his response to and active participation in internationally current artistic practices which emphasized decorative surface patterning and were broadly defined as "art nouveau." On the stylistic parallels of Repos with art nouveau, one critic remarked in 1908, "His line had something of oriental simplification, something of the boldness of the modern poster, and not a little of the restlessness of l'art nouveau."[96]

Other critics found the exaggerated posture in Repos troubling. For example, one noted, "His women, whose gowns are always treated in his characteristic simplified and abbreviated manner, here simulate the effects of a storm; their skirts are bloated and contorted. The woman who reclines on the divan seems to have been violently thrown there and sinks deeply into the cushions."[97] Another

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critic acknowledged Alexander's undeniable skill "in spite of the painful contortions and Loie-Fullerian billowing skirts which he subjects his models to."[98]

The allusion to Loie Fuller was not an isolated one. Indeed, Gil Baer, who regularly contributed a pictorial and highly satirical critique of the annual Salons to La Lanterne entitled "Les Salons Comiques," lampooned Alexander's Repos with the title Loie Fuller au Repos (fig. 45).[99] Although clearly not a portrait of Loie Fuller, Repos expressed in visual form the flowing lines and swirling drapery that distinguished Fuller's sensual serpentine dance and may, indeed, have been inspired by it. Loie Fuller (1862-1928), the American dancer, achieved international distinction for her innovative theatrical lighting and invention of the serpentine dance, a striking form of dance that emphasized the swirl and elegant, fluid movement of patterned drapery. Fuller made her Parisian debut in 1892 at the Folies-Bergère, winning acclaim by general audiences as well as artists--Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), Jules Chéret (1836-1932), and Auguste Rodin, among others--who found her sensual dance an animated analogue to the swirling arabesques, whiplash curves, and stylized line of art nouveau. Articles on Fuller appeared regularly in the 1890s with illustrations of her gowns, which often featured a stylized linear decoration, not unlike the gown in Repos, that quite literally came alive

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during her dance.[100] Fuller's popularity in France reached its peak in 1900 when she had her own theater at the Paris Exposition Universelle; the building itself was designed to reflect the swirling arabesques of her evocative dance.

In 1895, Alexander had his first significant exhibition in New York at the Second Annual Loan Exhibition of Portraits at the National Academy of Design.[101] Alexander exhibited several of his decorative figure paintings on which his Parisian fame rested including Repos, Alethea, and Le piano, as well as portraits of his father-in-law James W. Alexander, and his son James. Following the New York exhibition, a special collection of twenty four of Alexander's Parisian paintings were exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 65th Annual Exhibition, and were acclaimed by one critic as "unquestionably the most important and most distinguished portrait exhibition ever made by one artist in America."[102] Alexander's display featured portraits of men and women, as well as the figure paintings that he first exhibited at the 1895 Salon du Champ-de-Mars.[103] Although his portraits of men were admired for their direct expression of character and vigorous simplicity, his pictures of women were recognized as his most characteristic and distinctive in their subordination of the commonplaces of portraiture and their emphasis on pictorial and decorative values. With

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respect to Alexander's decorative motive one critic remarked:

> In these pictures he seems to be mainly concerned with a certain decorative quality, a composition of free sweeping lines made by graceful draperies, a color scheme harmonious and agreeable but often daringly original, or a pose unconventional and graceful, it may be, but in any effect contributing to the effect of the ensemble. It is in these works that he shows the most marked skill in suggesting textures and fabrics, and it is the rendition of color, of surfaces, and of masses arranged for a purpose, rather than the study of expression or individuality, that dominates his work.[104]

Alexander's "debuts" in New York and Philadelphia marked the beginning of his vigorous exhibition schedule on both sides of the Atlantic, which he would continue until his return to the United States in late 1901.

The decidedly international character of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts continued to distinguish its annual displays and preoccupy critical discussion. The 1896 Salon du Champ-de-Mars proved no exception to this. In fact, the Nationale's seventh annual Salon was its largest to date, featuring 1265 paintings, with over one-third of the works signed by foreign artists. With respect to the Nationale's internationalism, one critic remarked, "When it comes to portraiture, internationalism is all the rage. Very rare is the artist who fights for his own national expression in searching to find the national traits and qualities that are distinctly his own."[105] Moreover, the 1896 Salon du Champ-de-Mars marked the high point for American participation

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with twenty-five artists submitting work. Whistler did not submit any paintings to the Salon this year, although his pervasive influence continued to be discussed, in particular on the works of younger figure and portrait painters including Alexander, Guthrie, Lavery, Humphreys-Johnston, and Aman-Jean.[106] With respect to the decided modernity of the Nationale's Salon, one critic remarked, "If it was necessary to demonstrate one more time that a work of art has nothing to do with the literal transcription of nature, as had been the creed of realism, one need only to enter the Salon du Champ-de-Mars to find decisive proof of this once again."[107]

Alexander's single submission to the 1896 Salon du Champ-de-Mars, Étude, also exhibited as La femme en robe rose, The Pink Gown, and Portrait Study in Pink[108](fig. 46), was consistent with the aesthetic and pictorial strategies he had articulated in his paintings of 1895. A full-length figure, seen from the rear, stands in a pale pink gown. The full billowing skirt and puffed sleeves contrast with the fitted bodice, which is decorated by a red satin sash at the waist and back of the bare shoulders. The woman reaches down with her right hand to lift the edge of her dress; her profile is largely obscured by her black hair which is tied in a bun at the base of her neck. She stands in a shallow pictorial space in front of a dado, in which a curtain is decorated with undulating horizontal bands whose

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movement is paralleled by the edge of the billowing gown. A vase sits before a picture which is cut off laterally at the right edge of the canvas, calling attention to the pictorial structure within which Alexander positioned the figure for decorative effect. The influence of Whistler and the international currency of his decorative figure painting style continued to dominate critical discussion of Alexander's work.[109]

Alexander's modest submission to the 1896 Salon du Champ-de-Mars was inversely proportional to his increasing involvement with international exhibitions and to his first large-scale decorative commission.[110] The Alexanders spent the summer of 1895 in Seabright, New Jersey, which may have been when he received the mural commission to paint a series of lunettes for the new Congressional Library in Washington, D.C. Elmer E. Garnsey (1862-1946), a painter and a muralist who worked as assistant to art director Francis Davis Millet (1846-1912) at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, was director of all painted ornament in the Library under the chief artistic supervisor, Edward Pearce Casey (1864-1940), a Parisian-trained New York architect. Garnsey commissioned nineteen artists, some of whom had worked with him at the 1893 Exposition, to paint more than 100 murals.[111] It is reasonable to assume that Alexander was chosen as a muralist on the basis of his decorative figure painting style which could be gracefully adapted to the

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exigencies of mural painting. Moreover, the commissioned artists included many of America's most acclaimed painters and sculptors. Within this highly distinguished group, Alexander held a position of prominence and international recognition. At least five of the nineteen commissioned artists painted the murals in Europe: Alexander, Elihu Vedder (1836-1923), Walter MacEwen (1860-1943), Gari Melchers, and William deLeftwich Dodge (1867-1935).[112] In November 1896, Alexander sailed to the United States and was in Washington, D. C. for one week to supervise the installation of his murals.[113]

The mural decorations at the Library of Congress form an important chapter in the history of the American mural movement and remain a stunning testament of the ambitions and achievements of American artists who eagerly sought European training in the post-Civil War period and self-consciously aligned themselves within the broad flow of international cultural and artistic achievement.[114] Confidently relocating the American experience within a cosmopolitan and international context, these artists shifted away from antebellum preoccupation with native landscape and didactic content toward internationally current styles of figure painting that were informed by academic methods and, by denying any local or topical reference, were broad enough to bridge diverse expressive and aesthetic needs.

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The sheer scale and unrestrained ambition of the decorative scheme at the Library of Congress were remarkable and signalled a high water mark in the American mural movement, which was scarcely more than a quarter of a century old. The pioneering decorations of John La Farge at Trinity Church, Boston (1876-78) were unprecedented in their conception for a particular architectural setting and as an eloquent collaboration between artist and architect. They established the integration of painting, sculpture, and architecture as the cornerstone of American Renaissance mural painting.[115] It was not until the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, however, that the full implication of La Farge's achievements was realized, particularly in the collaboration between decorator and architect. Mural painting became a major force in American art for the first time. Its relevance was signalled by, among other things, the founding of the National Association of Mural Painters in 1895.

Following the magnificent, if ephemeral, example of the mural decorations at the 1893 Exposition, the muralists at the Library of Congress endorsed the grand and ambitious iconographic program, as articulated by Casey, celebrating western civilization and, in particular, the evolution of culture through knowledge. No one style dominated. Pictorialization ranged from Kenyon Cox's classically inspired allegorical images, to Edwin Blashfield's tempered

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allegorical style that combined ideal themes and traditional iconography with updating elements such as contemporary dress or modern implements, to Frank Benson's (1862-1951) and Robert Reid's (1862-1929) more lyrical, semi-idealized images, to Alexander's historically inspired quasi-narrative series. The decorative works, as a whole, were broadly allegorical and exhibited the confidence of American artists to locate American art and achievements within the general flow of cultural history that recognized no national boundaries.[116] Critic Royal Cortissoz (1869-1948) recognized the tremendous artistic and civic value of the decorations at the Library of Congress and declared, "The building will stand forth then as a national gallery of monumental art, in the dignity of its aims and in the lavishness of its embellishments, second to none."[117]

The "Evolution of the Book" was the subject of Alexander's decorations at the Library of Congress and consisted of six lunettes in the east corridor of the main entrance hall: "The Cairn," "Oral Tradition," "Egyptian Hieroglyphics" at the south end; "Picture Writing," "The Manuscript Book," and "The Printing Press" at the north end. Alexander's broad theme was a particularly fitting one for the library. Although it is not clear if Alexander was assigned the subject "The Evolution of the Book," the choice of themes may have been related to the position of Alexander's murals at the entrance hall of the main reading

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room. Flat linear patterning and subordination of detail characterize the designs. Figures are conceived largely in terms of outline with minimal modelling. A pale tonal palette enhances the two-dimensionality of the design. Although the drawings were ostensibly dictated by narrative, Alexander seems to strive for decorative simplicity and narrative restraint.

"The Evolution of the Book" begins with primitive man in a landscape near the sea assembling a cairn at the edge of an escarpment (fig. 47). As in all six lunettes, anatomical details are minimal; a pronounced outline and lack of modelling flatten the forms. A standing figure in a hooded robe, presumably the story teller, forms the central element of the adjacent lunette depicting "Oral Tradition," and is surrounded by a circle of listeners whose general form compliments the curve of the architectural setting (fig. 48). A delicate even light bathes the entire scene and flattens the composition. The meaning of the scene is succinctly expressed by the principal story teller, whose outstretched arm and staff create a strong vertical axis. "Egyptian Hieroglyphics" is the subject of the third lunette and features a young Egyptian man seated on a scaffold incising a hieroglyphic inscription over the portal of a temple, while a young girl seated next to him watches him work (fig. 49). In depicting the shift from verbal to written communication, Alexander crowds the composition with

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pictorial incident and detail. The figure of the young girl lacks narrative significance and decorative vitality. Moreover, the depiction of nude figures was highly atypical in Alexander's oeuvre and his lack of mastery in this area may explain in part the figure's ghost-like appearance. They are as thin and flat as the pictographic inscription above the portal.[118]

"Picture Writing" features two nude Indians, a young man and woman, in a sparse landscape. The young man paints on a tanned skin while the young woman watches (fig. 50). As in the other lunettes, detail is minimal and the composition is based on large, flat areas of low key color. A brilliant red in the low flat bowl, with which the young man paints, provides an accent of color and enlivens the tonal palette. Alexander had used this pictorial device in his figure paintings with success. The sinuous line created by the reclining young woman is also reminiscent of Alexander's figure paintings; all she is missing is the billowing gown to further accentuate the curves of her figure. Anatomical details are virtually ignored in the depiction of the young man; the hand with which he paints is most summarily treated. In "The Manuscript Book," a young monk is seated beside a small window, which provides the light for his illumination of a page of a grand folio (fig. 51).[119] The posture of the seated monk curves toward the center of the composition while the two figures in the rear

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are shown beneath an arch, thus enhancing the design which deliberately compliments its architectural frame. The final lunette depicts Gutenberg, the inventor of the modern printing press, examining a proof sheet in his office (fig. 52). He is flanked by two figures--his assistant on the left leans forward to examine the proof sheet and the apprentice on the right leans backward as he pulls against the handle of the massive press--who add incident to the narrative while enhancing the design which is carefully contained within the semi-circular panel. As in the other lunettes, the figures are conceived largely in terms of outline with minimal modelling.

A tension between narrative demands and decorative concerns characterized Alexander's murals at the Library of Congress. Without experience in large-scale painting and with a sense of obligation to his broad theme "The Evolution of the Book," Alexander utilized pictorial strategies he had developed as an illustrator in the 1880s. These included the prominent use of outline to define form, minimal modelling, and just enough narrative to establish the general context of the scene. Resonances of his mature decorative style of the 1890s, however, were conspicuously minimal and were seen mainly in the overall tonal palette. It is reasonable to assume that Alexander's sense of obligation to narrative precluded his ability or, perhaps, his inclination to impose a rigorous decorative order on the

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mural cycle. Moreover, as the figures were almost exclusively male rather than female, Alexander had little recourse to the aesthetic strategies he had developed in his figural works of the period. It is notable that Alexander selected male figures to express his narrative "The Evolution of the Book," and suggests Alexander's assumption, as Bailey Van Hook notes, "that the intellectual advance of the West rested on men's shoulders."[120] Alexander's desire for public success and critical approval in an area in which he had no professional experience may have also contributed to his recourse to a less daring style.

In an ambitious series of twelve articles on the decorations at the Library of Congress in progress,[121] Royal Cortissoz praised Alexander's lunettes as "virile," "authoritative," and perfectly adapted to the exigencies of mural painting. Moreover, he expressed relief that Alexander's display illustrated a "wise chastening of the painter's sheer technical fluency--a fluency which had threatened to become reckless and excessive." He compared Alexander's figure paintings, which he found both "brilliant and specious," with the mural decorations and concluded:

> It has been impossible not to admire them [Alexander's paintings], and at times admiration would border of a conviction that the painter's mastery was little short of being one of the best possessions of contemporary art. But then came in a troublous hint of a facility that was too facile, and while one of the pictures would prove a source of deep delight, another would not wear

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> well at all. In his decorations at Washington . . . there is much more than facility in them. There are solid merits of conception and style.[122]

Other critics had equally high expectations of Alexander's murals at the Library of Congress and comparisons with his easel painting were inevitable. One praised Alexander's ability to express the subject--"an expressiveness which might be envied by a painter of genre or history"[123]--whilemaintaining a decorative point of view in compositions organized around large, flat masses and simple, graceful lines. Charles Caffin, on the other hand, found Alexander's murals "disappointing" and the "decorative standpoint surprisingly inadequate," in contrast to the fluency of decorative arrangement in Alexander's figure and portrait paintings.[124] Caffin suggested that it was the introduction of incident and narrative detail that hindered Alexander's characteristic freedom and decorative inventiveness, while the vastness of Alexander's subject prohibited any sense of logical sequence or cohesion in the six panels. Critical disagreement notwithstanding, it was on the basis of this achievement that Alexander would ultimately receive two other major mural commissions, one of which was never executed, and the grandest of which, at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, remained unfinished at Alexander's death.[125]

Alexander acted as a foreign advisor for the first annual international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute

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while at work on the Library of Congress murals in the summer of 1896. The history of the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions, which began in 1896, forms a vital chapter in the discussion of the internationalism of American art at the turn of the twentieth century. The exhibitions were the single most comprehensive and accurate guide of the varied and complex topography of contemporary art presented in the United States. Moreover, they provided a distinguished forum within which to present American art alongside of, and more important, equal to work by contemporary European artists. Although internationalism was fundamental to the exhibitions from their inception, the Carnegie Institute was strongly supportive of American art. The structure of awards at the annual exhibitions reflected this support of American art within an international context: the first, second, and third class medals were open to all exhibitors while the so-called "chronological medal" was open only to Americans.[126] This implicit agenda of nationalism within an international context distinguished the Carnegie International exhibitions and alluded to incipient changes in the direction of American art that by the first decade of the twentieth century would grow increasingly concerned with nationalism.

John Wesley Beatty, a Pittsburgh native, was appointed in 1896 to establish and direct the Department of Fine Arts (later called the Museum of Art) at the Carnegie Institute

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by Andrew Carnegie. Beatty, an artist, had received academic training in Munich in 1876-77 and had served as the director of the Pittsburgh Art School since 1887.[127] Carnegie's choice of Beatty, in part, reflected the ultimately nationalist agenda at the Carnegie Institute. Carnegie sought a director who would be responsive to local and national needs while being articulate in modern art and being acquainted with America's finest practitioners at home and abroad. Beatty spent the summer of 1896 in Europe where he made a selection of works by prominent foreign painters and Americans residing abroad to complement the selection of works by American artists at home.[128]

According to Elizabeth Alexander, Alexander played a crucial role in assisting Beatty in Paris in the summer of 1896 with the selection of works for the first Carnegie Institute international exhibition. She later recalled, "He came at once to John, who took him to all the different prominent painters of all the different nationalities and introduced him. John really [was] the one who helped get these together."[129] The First Annual Exhibition opened November 5, 1896, with works by 210 American and European artists. Of the American artists included in the exhibition, almost all were foreign-trained.[130]

The Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts provided a vital model for the first Carnegie Institute international exhibition, particularly with its agenda of

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nationalism within an international context.[131] In fact, of the foreign artists and Americans residing abroad selected for the first exhibition, nearly all were members of the Nationale and were painters of considerable acclaim in Paris including Alexander, Aman-Jean, Besnard, Boldini, Dagnan-Bouveret, Alexander Harrison, Hitchcock, Lavery, Melchers, Puvis de Chavannes, Roll, Thaulow, Whistler, and Zorn. Moreover, the Nationale's broad display of many of the more modern tendencies in art, as well as its innovative installation designs--notably grouping artists works together--were duplicated in Pittsburgh.

Alexander submitted four works to the Carnegie Institute exhibition. All were figure paintings of women which he painted in Paris in the summer and fall of 1896.[132] The Mirror (fi53) features a woman seated before a mirror. Her body is in profile while her face turns away from the viewer as she gazes into the mirror and arranges her hair.[133] Golden yellows and greens are the dominant tones of the flowing gown, which is animated by sweeping curves. In Peonies, also exhibited as Green Girl and with the French spelling Pivoines (fig. 54), Alexander introduced a new posture to his repertory which he would use repeatedly over the next three years with minor variations. A woman is shown crouching in a shallow interior space in profile view. Her figure and voluminous gown dominate the composition and create a diagonal axis of movement. In this work, the

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figure crouches before a glass vase in which she arranges rose-colored peony blossoms. Alexander's decorative treatment of the sweeping breadth of gown, whose outline creates an elegant flowing line, and the delicate balance of low key color--the dull green dress decorated with white flowers seems to float on top of the luminous grey wall and dark green curtain-- distinguished this work and led one critic to remark, "Mr. Alexander has painted the kind of woman that is of interest to the keenly aesthetic."[134] In two related works--The Bronze Bowl, c. 1895 (fig. 55) and The Reader , 1896 (fig. 56)--a single figure is shown from the rear with her head turning away from the viewer: in the former she crouches down to arrange flowers in a bronze bowl; in the latter she is seated on the floor reading and leans against a ledge decorated with an arabesque linear pattern which compliments the random patterning of white flowers on her dark gown. In both works, the gown is the principal pictorial element in the composition and its flowing lines create a sense of movement across the surface of the canvas.[135]

Alexander's involvement with the Carnegie Institute's international exhibitions marked the beginning of his spirited, and what would ultimately become, lifelong commitment to the improvement of the conditions of contemporary American art. In 1897 Alexander was appointed a member of the first Paris advisory panel to the Carnegie

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Institute as were Puvis de Chavannes, Whistler, Mary Cassatt, Dagnan-Bouveret, and others.[136] In addition to contributing to almost every subsequent international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute through 1914, Alexander served on its International Jury of Award both in France and the United States after his repatriation in late 1901.

Alexander emerged at the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts with a striking new decorative style whose currency assured him international recognition and success. The three paintings he exhibited at his Salon debut of elegantly gowned women in sparse interiors established the basic tenets of his mature decorative--two-dimensional pictorial patterning, swirling linear motifs, and a low key tonal palette--which he utilized repeatedly in his images of women throughout the decade. Portraits of men, which had formed the cornerstone of his production in the 1880s, played a minor role in Alexander's search for the decorative in the 1890s. Finally, Alexander's association with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, whose internationalism was a central factor in its organization and dominated critical discussion of its annual Salons, signalled his direct and vital involvement with international art organizations and exhibitions that would distinguish his expatriate years. His subsequent association with the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions, the International Society of Sculptors,

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Painters and Gravers, and the Paris 1900 Exposition Universelle is among the most compelling example of this involvement.

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ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 3

1. Two important new studies examine American art and its complex and vital relationship to French art in the nineteenth century: H. Barbara Weinberg, The Lure of Paris. Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991) addresses the impact of French training on American artists; Lois Marie Fink, American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990) discusses the critical, aesthetic, and historical link between the French Salon and American art. Two recent studies have thrown new light on the importance of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts: Marie Jeannine Aquilino, "The Decorating Campaigns at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars and Salon des Champs-Élysees in the 1890s," Art Journal 48, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 78-84 considers the Nationale's important restructuring of the Salon installation; Constance Hain Hungerford, "Meissonier and the Founding of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts," Art Journal 48, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 71-77 examines the importance of Meissonier in the organization of the Nationale. For a reading of the institutional framework for the display of art work in Paris during the Third Republic, 1871-1914, see Pierre Vaisse, "Salons, expositions, et sociétés d'artistes en France, 1871 - 1914," in Saloni, gallerie, musei e loro influenza sullo sviluppo dell'arte dei secoli XIX e XX. Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale de Storia dell'Arte, ed. Francis Haskell (Bologna, 1981), pp. 141-55. Other important studies of the institutional framework of nineteenth-century French art include: Harrison White and Cynthia White, Canvases and Careers: Institutional Changes in the French Painting World (New York, 1965); Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1971); and Patricia Mainardi, Art and Politics in the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

2. See Boime, The Academy and French Painting, pp. 16-17.

3. Ibid, p. 17.

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4. The decoration of the Hôtel de Ville was one of the largest mural projects undertaken during the Third Republic. Many of the commissioned artists were members of the Nationale including Puvis de Chavannes, Albert Besnard, Alfred Roll, Eugène Carrière (1849-1906), and Dagnan-Bouveret. For a list of the artists who received mural commissions at the Hôtel de Ville, see Marius Vachon, Le Nouvel Hôtel de Ville de Paris, 1872-1900 (Paris: Conseil Municipal de Paris, 1900), pp. 224-30.

5. This account of the details of the schism is indebted to Hungerford, "Meissonier," pp. 71-72. For newspaper accounts of the growing divide see, for example, Gaston Calmette, Le Figaro, December 28, 29, 31 1889; January 1, 2 1890. See also Société Nationale des Beaux-Art, Procès-verbaux des séances de la délégation, Années 1890 - 1898 (Evreux: Charles Hérissey, 1898).

6. Arsène Alexandre, "Le Salons de 1902, Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts," Figaro Illustré 13, no. 147 (June 1902): 8. This Salon review included a history of the Nationale from its beginnings in 1890.

7. "La scission est complète entre le camp Meissonier et le camp Bouguereau. . . . Nous sommes menacés de deux salons." Roger-Milès, "Messieurs les Peintres," L'Événement 19 (January 5, 1890): 1.

8. See Hungerford, "Meissonier," p. 74.

9. "Pour la premier fois, l'exposition, la halle aux peintres, s'efforçait de mériter son nom de "Salon," et l'influence des ces principes d'arrangement s'étendit dorénavant non seulement à toutes les expositions de peintures, y compris celles de la Société des artistes français, mais encore aux Musées nationaux eux-mêmes." Alexandre, "Les Salons de 1902," 1902, p. 8.

10. "La Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, en s'établissant au Champ-de-Mars . . . y a realisé du premier coup une bonne partie des améliorations réclamées depuis longtemps par l'opinion publique dans l'organization matérielle des salons." Georges Lafenestre, "Les Salons de 1890. II. La Peinture au Champ-de-Mars." Revue des Deux Mondes 99 (June 15, 1890): 907.

11. Albert Wolff, "Le Salon Du Champ-de-Mars," Le Figaro (May 14, 1890): 1. Wolff previously attacked Meissonier's group as aristocratic and decidedly not national. See Albert Wolff, Bulletin de la Société des artistes français 13 (February 1890), quoted in Aquilino, "Decorating Campaigns," p. 78.

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12. Claude Phillips, "The Paris Salons I," The Art Journal 10, no. 7 (July 1890): 221-22.

13. See, for example, Georges Lafenestre, "Les Salons de 1891, III: Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Revue des Deux Mondes 106 (July 1, 1891): 181; and Albert Wolff, "L'Exposition de la Société Nationale," Le Figaro (May 14, 1891): 1.

14. "L'influence de M. Whistler a été et est encore à nos jeunes peintres, à chercher des effets rares et délicats dans l'unité des tons. Ses 'arrangements' et ses 'harmonies' ont montrés que l'art du coloriste consiste avant tous dans l'emploi des nuances, et . . . dans l'analyse des couleurs." Édouard Rod, "Les Salons de 1891 au Champ-de-Mars et au Champs-Élysees," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 6, no. 1 (July 1891): 10. Whistler was elected Sociétaire of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts after their 1891 Salon.

15. Whistler's portrait of his mother was purchased November 2, 1891 for 4,000 French francs. The purchase of American works by the Musée du Luxembourg is the subject of a master's thesis by Susan Grant, "American Paintings Acquired by the French Government, 1879 - 1900," George Washington University, 1983. A shorter version of this thesis is forthcoming in Le Marche de l'Art (Paris), with the title "Whistler's Mother Was Not Alone: French Acquisitions of American Paintings, 1879 - 1900." Annual reports of state purchases for the Musée du Luxembourg were published in various periodicals, usually in June and July, including La Revue Encyclopédique, La Chronique des arts et de la curiosité, and L'Artiste.

16. Elizabeth Robins Pennell, "The Two Salons," Fortnightly Review 51:306 (June 1892):840. See also Louis Cardon, "Le Salon du Champ de Mars," in Les Salons de 1892 (Paris: Georges Petit, 1892), p. 38.

17. Pierre L. Maud, "Notes d'Art et d'Esthétique," La Revue Blanche 2, no. 9 (June 1892): 360-61.

18. For opposing views of the Nationale's internationalism, see Georges Lafenestre, "Les Salons de 1892," Revue des Deux Mondes 112 (July 1, 1892): 197-98; and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, "The Two Salons," Fortnightly Review 51, no. 306 (June 1892): 841.

19. There is yet no in-depth study of American participation in the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, although it is discussed within a broader inquiry of

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American art at the Paris Salons in the nineteenth century in Fink, American Art, pp. 122-25.

20. Georges Lafenestre, "Les Salons de 1893 II: La Peinture au Champ-de-Mars," Revue des Deux Mondes 118 (July 1, 1893): 174.

21. "[La Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts] est devenue terriblement internationale. Elle avait aimablement ouvert ses portes, et la voilà, qui est envahie." L. Roger-Milès, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Siècle (May 9, 1893): 1 supplément.

22. Elizabeth Robins Pennell, "The Two Salons," Fortnightly Review 53, no. 318 (July 1893): 778.

23. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "The Paris Salons," The Nation 56, no. 1458 (June 8, 1893): 417.

24. Pennell, "The Two Salons," (July 1893): 781. For parallel critical viewpoints, see Armand Dayot, "La Vie Artistique: Les deux salons," Figaro Illustré 4 (June 1893): xxii; and Paul Flat, "La Peinture au Salon du Champ-de-Mars," L'Artiste 5, no. 30 (June 1893): 410.

25. "En sa mise en place [of Whistler], sa consécration aux yeux du grand public parisien, l'effort de la Société nouvelle n'eût pas été vain." Flat, "La Peinture," (June 1893): 413.

26. L. De Fourcaud, "Le Salon Du Champ-de-Mars," Le Gaulois (May 9, 1893): 5; and idem, "Les Arts Décoratifs aux Salons, III: Le Champ-de-Mars," Revue des Arts Décoratifs 14, no. 1 (July 1893): 13,18.

27. These works are catalogue numbers 6 through 8 respectively in Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1893 (Évreux: Ch. Hérissey, 1893), p.6.

28. Bailey Van Hook, "Decorative Images of American Women: The Aristocratic Aesthetic of the Late Nineteenth Century," Smithsonian Studies in American Art 4, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 58-59.

29. Leila Bailey Van Hook, "The Ideal Woman in American Art, 1875-1916" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1988), p. 430.

30. The titles of Alexander's paintings, particularly in the 1890s, are difficult to pin down as they were often exhibited with different titles. Moreover, even in works that were ostensibly portraits, they were often exhibited

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with a generic title, such as "Étude" or "Panneau," or with the dominant color tone as the title. Whenever possible, the author uses the title of the work as it was first exhibited at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars.

31. For a discussion of Whistler's use of coarse canvas in Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, see E.[lizabeth] R.[obins] and J.[oseph] Pennell, The Life of James McNeill Whistler (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1908), vol. 1, pp. 164,168. See also Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret MacDonald, Robin Spencer and Hamish Miles, The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), vol 1, p. 62.

32. For a discussion of Chase's relationship with Whistler, see Ronald G. Pisano, "Chase and Whistler," in A Leading Spirit in American Art: William Merritt Chase 1849-1916 (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1983), pp. 77-82. Study of a Young Girl is discussed in From All Walks of Life (New York: National Academy of Design, 1979), pp. 32-33. See also Doreen Bolger Burke, "Painters and Sculptors in a Decorative Age," in In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), p. 335.

33. Elizabeth Alexander noted further that after repatriating to the United States in 1901, Alexander continued to have canvas made to order in Europe, although he began ordering from a company in Scotland which could provide coarse heavy linen in wide roles which did not need any seams. See Lockman interview, frames 211-12.

34. See L.[ouis] De Fourcaud, "Les Art Décoratifs aux Salon. I. Le Champs-de-Mars," Revue des Arts Décoratifs 14, no. 11 (May 1894):343.

35. For a related discussion of the decorative and formal impact of the use of square canvas in American art at the turn of the twentieth century, see William H. Gerdts, "The Square Format and Proto-Modernism in American Painting," Arts Magazine 50, no. 10 (June 1976): 70-75.

36. Charles H. Caffin, "The Painter of Idealized Sentiment Through Portraits of Women in Poses. Some Examples of His Work," World's Work 9 (January 1905): 5686.

37. Ibid., p. 5687.

38. See, for example, Raoul Sertat, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," La Revue Encyclopédique 3, no. 60 (June 1, 1893): 324; and Claude Phillips, "The Salons, II," The Magazine of Art 16 (May 1893): 393.

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39. The 1892 Salon du Champ-de-Mars opened May 7, 1892. Besnard's Portrait of Mlle M. de J. was catalogue number 838; Aman-Jean's Mlle T. C. J. was catalogue number 7. See Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Catalogue Illustré de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (Paris: Société des Impremeries Lemercier, 1892), pp. vii-viii, 69. The portrait by Aman-Jean is of Thadée-Caroline Jacquet, who late became Aman-Jean's wife. The painting was purchased for the collection of the Musée du Luxembourg from the 1892 Salon and was deposited at the Louvre (now in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay). For information on Besnard, Aman-Jean, and Blanche, see respectively: Gabriel Mourey, Albert Besnard (Paris, 1905); Camille Mauclair, "L'Art et l'Ame d'Albert Besnard," L'Art et les Artistes 1 (April - September 1905): 109-19;Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, "Aman-Jean," Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne 49, no. 272 (January 1926): 36-41; Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Souvenir Aman-Jean (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1970); and Musée de l'Orangerie, Exposition Jacques-Émile Blanche, 1861-1942 (Paris: Musée de l'Orangerie, 1943).

40. Dannat's Portrait of Mme. XXX was catalogue number 303 at the 1892 Nationale Salon. See Catalogue Illustré (1892), pp. xiii, 16. La femme en rouge was one of six paintings that Dannat exhibited at the 1889 Exposition Universelle (catalogue number 77) that demonstrated Dannat's pictorial preoccupation with decorative color harmonies in a limited tonal range and the presentation of female elegance and grace. La femme en rouge is discussed in Annette Blaugrund et al., Paris 1889. American Artists at the Universal Exposition (Philadelphia and New York: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989), pp. 137-39. The purchase of this painting by the French government for the Musée du Luxembourg is discussed in Susan Grant, "American Paintings Acquired by the French Government, 1879-1900" (Master's thesis, George Washington University, 1983), pp. 70,72.

41. H. Barbara Weinberg, The Lure of Paris. Nineteenth-Century American Painters and their French Teachers (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), p. 214.

42. The bibliography on Sargent is substantial although a sampling of useful modern studies would include: Richard Ormond, John Singer Sargent: Paintings, Drawings and Watercolors (New York: Harper's Row, 1970); James Lomax and Richard Ormond, John Singer Sargent and the Edwardian Age (Leeds, England: Leeds Art Gallery, 1979); and Patricia Hills et al., John Singer Sargent (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986).

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43. "Au mode décoratif se rattachent les portraits suivant la formule "harmonique"--c'est-a-dire ton sur ton, ou poussé au grand effacement. Cette formule appartient en propre à M. Whistler, mais elle est . . . empruntée par les étrangers. M. John Alexander--un Américain--s'en inspire à sa manière. Il expose au Champ-de-Mars trois grandes figures de femmes, peintres sur toile d'emballage et comme en détrempe. . . . Nulle recherche d'intimité; des finesses soigneusement cherchées en tres gros; des poses simples, mais faisant tapisserie." De Fourcaud, "Le Salon Du Champ-de-Mars," (May 9, 1893), p. 5.

44. Pennell, "The Two Salons," (July 1893), p. 780. For the comparison with Aman-Jean, see N. N. "The Paris Salons," (June 8, 1893), p. 418.

45. Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Procès-verbaux, p. 143. On May 3, Alexander was proposed for the title of Associé. This proposition was confirmed by unanimous vote on June 2.

46. Lockman interview, frame 166.

47. Letter to E. E. Phelps, August 18, 1893, from his studio in Seabright, New Jersey, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 440.

48. The portraits of Mosenthal, Beasley, and Hartley are discussed in "John W. Alexander," New York Times Magazine (March 13, 1898): 13. The Alexanders travelled back and forth to the United States throughout the 1890s, often in the summer, during which time Alexander worked on portrait commissions in his studio in Seabright, New Jersey. See Lockman interview, frames 191-93.

49. See, for example, Paul Leprieur, "L'Art à l'étrangère en 1893 - 1894. Angleterre," La Revue Encyclopédique 5, no. 103 (March 15, 1895): 107; and "The Grafton Gallery Collection," The Art Journal 14, no. 3 (March 1894): 89. De la Gandara's Dame en vert was catalogue number 457 in Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, Catalogue des Ouvrages d'Art Exposés au Champ-de-Mars (Paris, 1893), p. 68. For information on de la Gandara, see Tristan Klingsor, "Antonio de la Gandara," Revue Illustré 28, no. 4 (February 1900): n. pag.

50. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "A New Gallery for London," The Nation 56 (March 2, 1893): 157-58. For information about the first Grafton Gallery exhibition, see also A. L. Baldry, "The Grafton Galleries," The Art Journal 13, no. 5 (May 1893): 145-47.

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51. Walter Sharp, "The Paris Salons," The Art Journal 14, no. 6 (June 1894): 186.

52. "elle [the Nationale] ne progresse point, et, restant stationnaire, elle n'apporte pas encore cette fois à l'art français cette formule nouvelle ou définitive d'aucuns en attendant." Auguste Dalligny, "L'Exposition de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts au Champ-de-Mars I," Le Journal des Arts 16, no. 29 (April 25, 1894): 1.

53. Firmin Javel, "Salon du 1894," L'Art Français 8, no. 368 (May 12, 1894): n. pag.

54. "Le gout du décoloré est assez générale et qu'il n'est pas dû une cause unique. Cette monochromie a été, des derniers années, le fin du fin, spécialement dans le domaine décoratif. . . . En peinture, le culte de l'anémie et du brouillard ont assez régné." De Fourcaud, "Les Arts Décoratifs aux Salon. I. Le Champ-de-Mars," (May 1894), p. 343.

55. Alexander's paintings were catalogue numbers 15 - 21. One of the three works entitled "Portrait" was illustrated in Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1894, Catalogue Illustré (Paris: Georges Petit, 1894), p. 158.

56. Lockman interview, frame [].

57. In 1893-94 Alexander received a commission to paint the portrait of one of the daughters of Armand Dayot, a French Minister of Fine Arts. In 1900 James Cowan of Edinburgh commissioned Alexander to paint portraits of his six daughters as well as one of himself. The same year, Alexander was commissioned to paint a portrait of President Loubet of France. See respectively Lockman interview, frames [] and 192. The (unlocated) portrait of President Émile Loubet (1838-1929) (Loubet was president of the Third Republic 1899-1906) is recorded in "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," in Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of Paintings, John White Alexander Memorial Exhibition (Pittsburgh: Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, 1916), p. 45. The commission from President Loubet is also noted in Lockman interview, frame [].

58. See, for example, Charles Yriarte, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Figaro (April 24, 1894): 1 supplément. Elizabeth Pennell was disappointed by what she perceived as the Nationale's gradual decline from the high standards it had established in its secession from the older Salon, and found the portraits, particularly those by Alexander, Aman-

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Jean, and de la Gandara, among the few triumphs of the exhibition. See N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "The Paris Salon," The Nation 58 (June 14, 1894): 444-45; and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, "The Two Salons," Fortnightly Review 55, no. 331 (June 1894): 731, 735.

59. Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Procès-verbaux, p. 203.

60. See, for example, N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "The Paris Salons," (June 14, 1894), p. 445; and Georges Lafenestre, "Les Salons de 1894, II," Revue des Deux Mondes 124 (July 1, 1894): 178. Alexander continued to exhibit decorative portraits and figure paintings at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, but never exhibited portraits of men again.

61. For a description of the portrait of Pranishnikoff, see "The New Salon in Paris," New York Times (April 24, 1894): 5; and Yriarte, "Le Salon," (April 24, 1894), p. 1 supplément, who referred to this portrait as Le peinture coiffé du fez.

62. The summer of 1894, which the Alexanders spent in Etrétat, was a very productive one for Alexander; he completed at least nine paintings. See Carnegie Institute, "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," p. 56. According to an incomplete list of paintings from the 1890s in the Alexander papers, the Alexanders returned to Etrétat at least one more time, in the summer of 1895. See JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frames 226-400. Although no painting with the title Panel for Music Room appears in either this list or the 1916 Carnegie Institute "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," it was most likely painted in Etrétat as it shares many of the pictorial strategies of other paintings securely dated from that summer.

63. For a discussion of this painting, see Mary Anne Goley, "John White Alexander Panel for Music Room," Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts 64, no. 4 (1989): 4-15.

64. It is reasonable to assume that Alexander was familiar with Dewing's The Garden and Weir's Idle Hours as both works had been exhibited in New York in the 1880s: the former at the American Art Gallery's showing of the collection of Thomas B. Clarke in December of 1883; the latter at the fourth annual Prize Fund exhibition in 1888 where it was awarded a $2,000.00 prize. For information on Dewing's The Garden and other early works, see Susan Hobbs, "Thomas Wilmer Dewing: The Early Years, 1851-1875," American Art Journal 13, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 35. Weir's Idle Hours is discussed in Doreen Burke, American Paintings III:

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Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), pp. 138-39.

65. Alexander exhibited: 1. Portrait - pink (1894 SNBA), 2. Portrait - grey (1893 SNBA), 3. Portrait - black (1893 SNBA), 4. Portrait - yellow (1893 SNBA), 5. Portrait-man in profile (probably Thaulow, 1894 SNBA), 6. Portrait - painter (probably Pranishnikoff, 1894 SNBA), 7. Portrait, 8. The Mirror (1894 SNBA), 9. The Piano (1894 SNBA). See Art Institute of Chicago, Catalogue of the Seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Artists (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1894), p. 11. The exhibition was held October 29 - December 17, 1894.

66. Ibid., n. pag.

67. Miss Sara Hallowell, who was acquainted with many of the American artists in Paris, selected the works from their studios abroad. See ibid., n. pag.

68. One figure study was illustrated in Galeries Georges Petit, Exposition de la Société Internationale de Peinture et Sculpture (Paris: Imprimerie Georges Petit, 1895), p. 7. For a brief discussion of Alexander's submissions to the exhibition, see "Les Expositions. L'Exposition Internationale," L'Art Français 8, no. 412 (March 16, 1895): 3.

69. "Le Société Internationale ne compte que huit étrangers sur une quarantaine de membres." Raoul Sertat, "Un trimestre d'art," La Revue Encyclopédique 5, no. 104 (April 1, 1895): 129.

70. The history of the Galleries Georges Petit international exhibitions forms another chapter in the complex history of late nineteenth-century international exhibitions, although it has been the subject of little research. Tracing the evolution of the exhibitions themselves is problematic as the name changed at least three times: the first exhibition in 1882 was called "Exposition Internationale de Peinture;" in 1886 the exhibition expanded to include sculpture; by 1895 it was called "Société Internationale de Peinture et Sculpture." For a study of the mechanics and the results of art dealing in the Third Republic, see Nicholas Green, "Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation in the Artistic Field in France During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," Art History 10, no. 1 (March 1987): 59-78. See also Jean-Paul Bouillon, "Sociétés d'artistes et institutions officielles dans la seconde moitié du XIX siècle," Romantisme 54 (1986): 89-113. Many of the Galeries Georges Petit exhibition catalogues are reprinted in Theodore Reff, ed., Modern Art

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in Paris 1855 to 1900 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), volume 25.

71. Alexander continued to participate in the Galeries Georges Petit international exhibitions through 1899. See JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 271.

72. "L'exposition de la Société Nationale est internationale au premier chef. Sur quatre cent exposants inscrits au catalogue de la section de peinture, cent soixante-quinze appartiennent à toutes les nations du monde. La proportion est énorme." M. de Fourcaud, "Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Gaulois (April 24, 1895): 6.

73. Thiébault-Sisson, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Temps (April 24, 1895): 1-2 supplément.

74. E[lizabeth]. R[obins]. Pennell, "Pictures of the Year. No. II. The French Salons," Fortnightly Review 58, no. 343 (July 1895): 45.

75. Charles Yriarte, "The Paris Salons of '95," The Cosmopolitan 19, no. 2 (June 1895): 177.

76. G. W., "The Salon of the Champ-de-Mars," The Illustrated London News 106 (June 8, 1895): 722.

77. See, for example, Roger Marx, "Les Salons de 1895. IV," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 14, no. 2 (August 1895): 110; and Jean Bernac, "The Paris Salons of 1895," The Art Journal 15, no. 6 (June 1895): 184.

78. JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 240. Repos was catalogue number 18 and was illustrated in Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1895. Catalogue Illustré (Paris, 1895), p. 106.

79. Caffin, "Painter of Idealized Women," p. 5688.

80. For a discussion of repose in late nineteenth-century painting, see Linda Nochlin, "Visions of Languor," House and Garden 155 (April 1983): 124-29, 172._

81. Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity. Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 105-06. For his entire discussion on the nymph with the broken back, see pp. 94-108.

82. Bernice Leader, The Boston Lady as a Work of Art: Paintings by the Boston School at the Turn of the Century

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(Ann Arbor: UMI, 1986), p. 188, quoted in Van Hook, "Ideal Women," pp. 341-42.

83. JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frames 240-42.

84. For a description of all ten works in the Salon, see "Salon of Champ-de-Mars. Splendid Display by Americans," New York Times (April 21, 1895): 5.

85. JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 239.

86. The gowns themselves were clearly important to Alexander; frequently he painted the same gown or variations on a few basic styles. As Elizabeth Alexander was often his model, it is possible that some or all of the gowns were hers and not necessarily part of Alexander's studio props. Alexander may have used local models as well, as he did later in Onteora, although there is no reference to this in his papers. Alexander may have taken liberty in accentuating certain features of the gowns in his paintings, however, their basic style--a tight, fitted bodice and a full skirt that swayed freely--reflected contemporary taste in women's fashion. In fact, the preferred skirt of the 1890s was full and flowing; the lack of stiff pleats and full petticoats allowed the garment to suggest the contour of the form below. For contemporary discussions of women's fashion, see Cabris, "1891 - 1900," in Le Costume de la Parisienne au XIX Siècle (Paris: Société Anonyme des Publications Scientifiques et Industrielles, 1902), pp. 229-55; and Octave Uzanne, The Modern Parisian (London: William Heinemann, 1912). For a modern discussion of women's fashions, see Valerie Steele, Fashions and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty From the Victorian Age to the Jazz Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

87. The titles Fancy Dress and Reflection are both modern assignments by the Graham Gallery. For a discussion of Fancy Dress, see Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856 - 1915, Fin-de-Siècle American (New York: Graham Gallery, 1980), pp.24-25.

88. Van Hook, "Ideal Women," p. 283.

89. Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity, p. 122. Dijkstra suggests that the heyday of actresses at the turn of the century was related to these prevalent ideological assumptions of gender.

90. Ibid., p. 141.

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91. See Jean Bernac, "The Paris Salons of 1895," The Art Journal 15, no. 6 (June 1895): 187; and Jean-E. Schmitt, "Salon du Champ-de-Mars. III," Le Siècle (April 29, 1895): 3.

92. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "The Salons," The Nation 60 (June 13, 1895): 460.

93. See, for example, Roger Marx, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars à vol d'oiseau," La Revue Encyclopédique 5, no. 106 (May 1, 1895): 168; and Georges Lafenestre, "Les Salons du 1895. La Peinture," Revue des Deux Mondes 129 (June 1, 1895): 670.

94. Bing's gallery, l'Art Nouveau, opened in December 1895. The space itself was an expression of Bing's understanding of decorative ensemble. Belgian architect Victor Horta (1861-1946) did architectural plans for the facade. The interior was distinguished by stained glass windows made by Louis Comfort Tiffany and was based on designs by eleven artists: Albert Besnard, Edouard Vuillard, Paul Serusier (1864-1927), Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis (1870-1943) among others. Decorative panels were painted by Frank Brangwyn, English artist and disciple of William Morris (1834-1896). During his first six months in operation, Bing held exhibitions of works by Jacques Émile Blanche (1861-1942), Eugène Carrière, and Edward Munch (1863-1944). For a study of Siegfried Bing and his enterprise, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, Art Nouveau Bing. Paris Style 1900 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986).

95. For a discussion of late nineteenth-century American art within the context of art nouveau, see Diane Chalmers Johnson, "Decorative Painting and Sculpture in America," in American Art Nouveau (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), pp. 214-77

96. Christian Brinton, "The Art of John W. Alexander," Munsey's Magazine 39 (September 1908): 754.

97. "Ses femmes, dont les robes sont toujours dans cette manière simplifiée et abréviative que l'on sait, affectent maintenant des allures de tempête; leurs jupes sont comme boursoufflées, contorsionées. La femme couchée sur un divan parâit y avoir été projetée avec violence et s'être énfoncée dans les coussins." Firmin Javel, "Salon du Champ-de-Mars, 1895," L'Art Français 9, no. 420 (May 11, 1895): n. pag.

98. "malgre les contorsions pénibles et le ballonnement loie-fullerian de jupes qu'il impose à ses modèles." Albert

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Sarraut, "Le Salon: Au Champ-de-Mars," L'Artiste 9, no. 52 (April 1895): 253.

99. Gil Baer, "Les Salons Comiques. Salon du Champ-de-Mars, No. 1," La Lanterne (April 28, 1895):4.

100. See, for example, Roger Marx, "Choréographie: Loie Fuller," La Revue Encyclopédique 3, no. 52 (February 1, 1893): 106-8; and "La Loie Fuller," La Revue Illustré 15, no. 178 (May 1, 1893): 334-35.

101. The exhibition, held October 30 - December 7, was the second annual benefit exhibition for St. John's Guild and the Orthopedic Hospital in New York. Alexander exhibited one painting, Portrait - Fancy Costume, to the National Academy of Design's first benefit, "Portrait of Women Loan Exhibition," held November 1 - December 1, 1894.

102. Sears, "The Portrait Work of John W. Alexander," (July 1896), p. 65. The exhibition was held December 23, 1895 - February 22, 1896.

103. See Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Catalogue of the Sixty-Fifth Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1895), pp. 11-12, for a complete list of the works exhibited.

104. Sears, "The Portrait Work," p. 66.

105. "En ce qui touche le portrait l'internationalism y fait rage. Rare sont les artistes luttant pour leur nationalité en cherchant la fixer en traits décisifs leurs types nationaux ou en les fixant nationalement." L. De Fourcaud, "Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Gaulois (April 24, 1896): 2 supplément.

106. See, for example, Arsène Alexandre, "La Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts," Le Figaro (April 24, 1896): 4; Paul Adam, "Les Salons de 1896. La Peinture, Les Dessins et les Objets d'Art au Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 16, no. 469 (July 1896): 5-9; Claude Phillips, "The Salons," Fortnightly Review 60, no. 355 (July 1896): 127; and Thadée Natanson, "L'Art des Salons," La Revue Blanche 10, no. 56 (June 1896): 520-24.

107. "S'il était nécessaire de démontrer une fois de plus que l'oeuvre d'art n'a rien à voir avec la transcription littérale de nature dont la realisme a fait son credo, il suffirait, pour entrouver une preuve décisive, d'entrer au Salon du Champ-de-Mars." Thiébault-Sisson, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Temps (April 24, 1896): 3.

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108. Alexander's painting was number 8 in the catalogue, Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1896 (Evreux: C. Hérissey, 1896), p. 22.

109. See, for example, Raymond Bouyer, "L'Art Aux Salons de 1896, I," L'Artiste 11, no. 65 (May 1896): 348; and Roger Marx, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," La Revue Encyclopédique 6, no. 138 (September 1, 1896): 286.

110. By 1896, Alexander's fame had spread widely; he was invited to submit works to international exhibitions around Europe. For example, Alexander exhibited three paintings shown at previous Nationale Salons to the International Art Exhibition in Berlin, held May 3 - September 30, 1896. See Hans Rosenhagen, "L'Exposition Internationale des Beaux-Arts de Berlin in 1896, I," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 16 (September 1896): 256, and "II," (October 1896): 346.

111. Library of Congress muralists who painted decorations at the World's Columbian Exposition include Edwin Blashfield, Robert Reid, Kenyon Cox, William deLeftwich Dodge, and Gari Melchers. For information on the actual building of the library and a discussion of the decorations, see Herbert Small, compiler, Handbook of the New Congressional Library (1896; rpt. Boston: Curtis and Cameron, 1897).

112. See Richard Murray, "The Art of Decoration," in Perceptions and Evocations: The Art of Elihu Vedder (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), p. 239.

113. Alexander arrived in New York on November 14, travelled to Washington, D.C., and returned to Paris on November 21. See "Artist Alexander's Work: Decorations for the Congressional Library in Washington," New York Times (November 17, 1896): 3.

114. For a discussion of the American Renaissance, see Richard Guy Wilson, "The Great Civilization," and Richard Murray, "Painting and Sculpture," in American Renaissance, 1876 - 1917 (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1979), pp. 11-70 and 153-89. See also H. Barbara Weinberg, "Renaissance and Renascences in American Art," Arts 54, no. 3 (November 1979): 172-75; and Lois Marie Fink, "The Innovation of Tradition in Late Nineteenth-Century American Art," American Art Journal 10, no. 2 (November 1978): 63-71.

115. For a discussion of John La Farge's pioneering role in the American mural movement, see H. Barbara Weinberg, "John La Farge: Pioneer of the American Mural

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Movement," in Henry Adams et al., John La Farge (Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Museum of Art and National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1987), pp. 160-93. See also H. Barbara Weinberg, The Decorative Work of John La Farge (1972; New York: Garland Publishing, 1977).

116. At the same time, the subject matter and treatment of some of the murals alluded to, if obliquely, changes in the direction of American mural painting that would ultimately spell the demise of allegory as the dominant mode. For a discussion of the critical reaction to the murals and incipient changes in the direction of American mural painting, see the author's "In Search of an American Iconography: Critical Reaction to the Murals at the Library of Congress," Winterthur Portfolio 25, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 231-239. For a case study of these shifting priorities at the turn of the century, see Cynthia Sanford, Heroes in the Fight for Beauty: The Muralists at the Hudson County Courthouse (Jersey City: Jersey City Museum, 1986), pp. 9-33.

117. Royal Cortissoz, "Painting and Sculpture in the New Congressional Library X: The Decorations of Messrs. Benson, Walker, van Ingen and Pearce," Harper's Weekly 41 (February 27, 1897): 201. In this article, Cortissoz compared the achievements of the muralists at the Library of Congress with those of the Hôtel de Ville, Paris. Although he conceded the preeminence of the French, he found the stylistic parallels between the two a potent indication of the rapid development of the American school of mural painting which was still in its infancy. By contrast, the modern French school had nearly a century of experience and masters. The mural decorations for the Hôtel de Ville, Paris, form an important chapter in the history of decorative painting in the Third Republic in France. A study of these decorations and their probable impact on American mural painting--many of the mural designs for the Hôtel de Ville were exhibited at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars and were presumably familiar to American artists in Paris--remains beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the following references form a skeleton for such an investigation: Thérèse Burollet et al., Le triomphe des mairies, Grands décors républicains à Paris, 1870 - 1914 (Paris" Musée du Petit Palais, 1986); H. Fiérens-Gevaert, "l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris I" and "l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris II," Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne 6, no. 31 and no. 32 (October and December 1899): 281-98 and 475-96; Lucien Lambeau, l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris (Paris: H. Laurens, 1893); and Marius Vachon, Le Nouvel Hôtel de Ville de Paris, 1872 - 1900 (Paris: Conseil Municipal de Paris, 1900).

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118. Nudes are rare in Alexander's oeuvre. His only two essays with nude figures after the Library of Congress murals were in Pandore, 1898, and in the allegorical panels of the Carnegie Institute mural cycle, 1905-08.

119. According to Elizabeth Alexander, the cabby who drove the Alexanders around Paris posed for the figure of the monk. See Lockman interview, frame 188.

120. Van Hook, "Lyrical to the Epic," p. 70. Van Hook cites Blashfield's depiction of America as a man seated next to a dynamo (1896, LoC) as another expression of these widely held gender assumptions.

121. Cortissoz's articles appeared in Harper's Weekly between December 1895 and March 1897. For his discussion of Alexander's murals, see idem, "Painting and Sculpture in the New Congressional Library IX: The Decoration of John W. Alexander," Harper's Weekly 41, no. 2092 (January 23, 1897): 82-85.

122. Ibid., p. 82.

123. "John White Alexander: Portrait-Painter, Decorator, Illustrator," The Critic 35 (July 1899): 610.

124. Caffin, "Painter of Idealized Women," pp. 5691-92.

125. Alexander's mural commissions in Harrisburg and Pittsburgh are discussed in Chapter 5.

126. For information on medals and medalists, see Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, "Awards and Jurors, 1896 - 1955 Internationals," in 1896 - 1955. Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings From Previous Internationals (Pittsburgh: Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, 1958), n. pag.

127. For a brief discussion of Beatty's role at the Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, see Henry Adams, "Introduction," in Carnegie Institute, American Drawings and Watercolors in the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, 1985), pp. 6-10. For a discussion of Andrew Carnegie's role with respect to American art at the Carnegie Institute, see Annette Balugrund and Susan Sivard, The Taste of Andrew Carnegie (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1991).

128. Although Beatty assumed the monumental task of selecting all the works for the first annual exhibition without formal assistance, foreign advisory panels were established in Paris, London, and Munich the following year,

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which were responsible for selecting European works. See "Pictures at Pittsburgh," Harper's Weekly 40, no. 2082 (November 14, 1896): 1120; and "Artists and Juries: The Tenth Annual Carnegie International Exhibition," Journal of the Archives of American Art 7, nos. 3 and 4 (July/October 1967): 24.

129. Lockman interview, frames 179-80.

130. See Carnegie Art Galleries, First Annual Exhibition Held at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Art Galleries, 1896) for a complete list of artists. The exhibition was open November 5, 1896 - January 1, 1897.

131. For a discussion of the European works exhibited at the first Carnegie Institute international exhibitions and of the parallels between these exhibitions and the annual Salon du Champ-de-Mars, see Gabriel Weisberg, "Tastemaking in Pittsburgh: The Carnegie Internationals in Perspective, 1896 - 1905," Carnegie Magazine 56, no. 10 (July/August 1983): 20-26, 40-41. For a general history of the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions, see Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, 1896 - 1955.

132. JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 251.

133. The Mirror (catalogue number 2) was illustrated in Carnegie Art Galleries, First Annual Exhibition, n. pag. The other works exhibited were Peonies (catalogue number 3), Yellow Girl (catalogue number 4), and Red and Black (catalogue number 5).

134. Georgia W. Fraser, "John W. Alexander, His Paintings," Art Education 4 (May 1898): 171.

135. The Bronze Bowl is recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 252, and was included in Grand Central Art Galleries, La Femme: The Influence of Whistler and Japanese Print Masters on American Art (New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, 1983), p.5. The Reader may be The Black Dress recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 250.

136. See Carnegie Art Galleries, Second Annual Exhibition Held at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Art Galleries, 1897) for a list of members of the Paris Advisory Panel. See also Weisberg, "Tastemaking," p. 20.

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CHAPTER 4

1897 - 1901: PARIS II
REFINEMENT OF DECORATIVE STYLE

Alexander's articulation of an internationally current decorative figure and portrait painting style and the meteoric ascent of his artistic career in the first half of the 1890s were followed in the late 1890s by the refinement of his decorative style. With the foundation of the aesthetic principles and pictorial strategies he had established earlier in the decade, Alexander continued to explore the decorative possibilities of beautifully gowned women in minimal interiors. Elegant manipulation of flowing lines and curves, two-dimensional pictorial structure, and a low-key tonal palette remained fundamental elements of his decorative style. Recognition by his colleagues and in the critical press was soon followed by honors and awards, the number of which signalled Alexander's artistic triumph and acclaim on an international scale. At the same time, incipient changes in the direction of American art at the turn of the century--in particular, a general decline in the expatriate movement and an increasing concern with nationalism in a less insistently international context--were to have an effect on Alexander's career. The decision to return permanently to the United States in late 1901 was his most striking response to these changes.

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Alexander continued to exhibit annually at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars through 1899, although his contributions were less numerous as he became increasingly involved in other international exhibitions and organizations on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, Alexander became a member of the Paris advisory board for the Carnegie Institute's international exhibitions while continuing as a regular contributor to its annual exhibitions. He maintained this position from 1897 to 1902. In 1898, Alexander was made an honorary member of the recently founded International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers in London. The organization, headed by Whistler, shared a commitment to artistic liberality and a decidedly international membership with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. That same year, Alexander exhibited at the Salon de la Libre Esthétique in Brussels, whose artistic agenda paralleled that of the Nationale as well, particularly in its commitment to modern tendencies in art and an international orientation. The purchase of Alexander's Le noeud vert (later exchanged for Portrait gris) for the Musée du Luxembourg in 1898 was yet another signal, a highly distinguished one, of his stature among the finest artists in the international art arena in Paris. His being named Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur in 1901 made this distinction even more prestigious.[1]

Alexander's broadening European exposure was matched by his regular contributions to exhibitions in the United

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States after 1896, particularly to the annual exhibitions of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Society of American Artists, and the National Academy of Design. Alexander's contributions were regularly and favorably discussed in the critical press. This acclaim was matched by his professional colleagues as Alexander was awarded three prestigious prizes in America during his final expatriate years: the Temple Gold Medal, 1897, and the Lippincott Prize, 1899, were awarded by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; the Carnegie Prize, 1901, was awarded by the Society of American Artists. Ironically, as Alexander's participation in international exhibitions increased, his production of work began to decline proportionally. He often submitted the same painting to several different exhibitions, both in Europe and the United States, as did many other artists. It is likely that Alexander was anxious to display his acclaimed Parisian works in other exhibitions to further his career and strengthen his base of commissions. At the same time, the new demands on his schedule may have infringed upon his studio time, thus curtailing his production.

At the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, the internationalism of American art and the expatriate movement in general reached a high water mark. By contrast, the American display at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle alluded to the impending dissolution of American art's

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internationalism. In fact, a fundamental shift in priorities toward more decidedly national concerns characterized much of American art at the turn of the twentieth century and informed the agenda of the American display at the Exposition. Although the look of the American work at the 1900 Exposition was not fundamentally different than that of the 1889 Exposition--decorative and/or academic figure painting dominated as it had in the previous Exposition--the organizers of the 1900 display sought to present the American display as representative of a distinct and unified national expression. In contrast to the 1889 Exposition where works by American expatriate artists were exhibited separately from those by their colleagues in America (much to the detriment of resident American artists), the American works were shown collectively and in alphabetical order by artist's name at the 1900 Exposition. In the preface to the catalogue of the American display at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, art commissioner H. Hobart Nichols cited American art's maturity in the last decade of the nineteenth century as the foundation on which to build a genuinely national school of art. The international context of the Exposition now provided the backdrop on which to cast new light on national distinctions between American art and that of all other nations. Although a definition of what made American art American was by no means clear, American artists, exhibition

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organizers, and writers alike began to look increasingly inward with the confidence that a distinctly national expression and iconography would be revealed. This confidence in American art's newly-won independence from foreign influences informed the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition, whose display focused exclusively on art made by Americans.

Many factors contributed to the erosion of American art's internationalism at the turn of the twentieth century, which witnessed a general decline in the expatriate movement and a coincident increasing concern with nationalism. During the 1870s and 1880s, European residency was required of American artists who wished to learn academic techniques, to find artistic or exotic subject mater, or to become fluent in internationally current art practices. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, vastly improved art conditions in the United States diminished the urgency of European study and travel. The general trend toward decorative painting and its preoccupation with formal values and technique rather than with subject matter per se, also affected this shift. These changing priorities form an important chapter in the complex history of the vicissitudes of internationalism of American art which has informed American art's native tradition and artistic production to some degree from its beginning.[2]

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Alexander's participation in the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle and the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition may be considered within the context of these shifting priorities in American art. Alexander's receipt of a Gold Medal and his coveted position as an international juror at the 1900 Exposition Universelle signalled the apex of his international achievements and acclaim. By the time Alexander received a Gold Medal at the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition, he had already repatriated. His decision to return permanently to the United States may have been influenced, at least in part, by his perception of these shifting priorities in American art. Throughout the decade, Alexander's concern with issues of nationalism in American art grew more pronounced and began to have an impact on his decorative style as well as on his choice of subject matter.

The year 1897 was significant in the history of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars as it was the last year le Salon dissident exhibited in the Palais des Beaux-Arts. Plans for the construction of new buildings and the demolition of older ones for the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle were well under way by this time. Among others slated for demolition were the Palais des Beaux-Arts, built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle, and the Palais de l'Industrie, which had been the site of the annual Salon of the Société

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des Artistes Français. During the course of construction of the new Grand and Petit Palais des Beaux-Arts, the two rival Salons would exhibit together at the Galerie des Machines on the Champ-de-Mars, a building constructed for the 1889 Exposition Universelle.

Comparisons between the Salon des Champs-Élysées and the Salon du Champ-de-Mars were an inevitable and regular feature in critical discussions of the annual Salons; the year 1897 was no exception to this. However, the incipient changes in the exhibition structure of the rival Salons and the certainty of their reunion, if only architectural, inspired many critics to even more fulsome and spirited praise and disparagement on the part of both Salons. Moreover, most critics took a retrospective view of each Société, analyzing their respective differences and the results of their split in 1890.

Complaints about the number of works in each Salon were ubiquitous; the Salon du Champ-de-Mars exhibited 1272 paintings, of which only a small portion were reported as exceptional. Of this dissolution of standards, one critic remarked, "As always, several exhibitors abuse their right to exhibit several canvases and cover large areas with small and insignificant works."[3] Another critic found the works at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars suitable for viewing in the studio but not of exhibition quality.

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The Nationale's endorsement of artistic liberality and its display of many of the modern tendencies in art, particularly art for art's sake, versus the prevailing conservatism and academicism at the SAF, were acknowledged by most critics and praised by some. With respect to this contrast one critic remarked, "I am not sure that there is not as much wasted cleverness, so much ill-directed skill at the Champ-de-Mars [as at the Champs-Élysées]. But here [Champ-de-Mars] it is less stolidly conventional, more daringly independent."[4] Another critic observed, "The old exhibition admits a greater number of subject or incident pictures, the new one leans more toward the art in which treatment is of more interest than subject."[5]

The Nationale's innovative commitment to the display of decorative arts alongside of fine arts was also widely acclaimed. The subsequent display of decorative arts at the SAF, as well as in numerous other exhibitions in the 1890s, testified in part to the validity of the Nationale's innovation. Finally, the internationalism of the display at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars continued to preoccupy critics although opinions on the value and the consequence of the Nationale's receptivity of foreign artists varied widely. One writer, for example, condemned the Nationale's internationalist policy as financially detrimental to French artists. He said:

> Why does the Société which organizes the Salon du Champ-de-Mars call itself the <u>national</u> Société of

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> fine arts? It should call itself the Salon of foreigners. Over half of its exhibitors are foreign. The financial harm that this exposition has done to our French painters will never be fully known. From this point of view, the result of the schism was extremely ill-fated.[6]

Alexander submitted five paintings to the 1897 Salon du Champ-de-Mars. All were figure studies of women, three of which had been exhibited at the first Carnegie International the previous winter.[7] His most striking submission of the year, and perhaps his best known work, was Isabella et le pot de basilic (fig. 57) (often exhibited with the English title Isabella and the Pot of Basil), painted in Paris in the winter of 1897.[8] Alexander's lugubrious theme was inspired by Keats's "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil," itself based upon a macabre story from Boccaccio's Decameron. According to the poem, Isabella's humbly-born lover, Lorenzo, is killed by her brothers, who felt the young servant was not deserving of their fair sister. After being visited by Lorenzo's ghost in a dream, Isabella goes to her lover's grave in a forest near Florence, unearths the body, and mad with grief, severs its head and kisses it with "lips more chill than steel." Keats described the chilling scene:

> Love never dies, but lives, Immortal Lord:
> If Love impersonate was ever dead
> Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.
> T'was love; cold - dead indeed, but not dethroned.[9]

Isabella returned home with her lover's severed head and buried it in a pot of sweet basil, which grew thick and green with her tears. Realizing the source of Isabella's

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grief and immobility, her brothers took away the pot of basil, after which she soon died, her tears still wet upon her checks.

Alexander's Isabella is a formidable heroine. The elongated standing figure looms larger than life and fills the narrow canvas from top to bottom. Shown in profile, Isabella stands in a flowing gown and leans on a high shelf, on which the earthenware pot rests. Her left hand, barely visible as it is cast in shadow, grasps the rim of the pot, while her right hand gently rests on its front side. White peony blossoms are strewn on the shelf; a single blossom rests at her feet. Her head is poised between a curtain behind her and the pot, which seems to graze her cheek. Her closed eyes and parted lips add an element of eroticism and languor to the lugubrious scene.

Alexander's facile and elegant manipulation of curves and flowing lines for decorative effect is unequalled in this work as is his adept handling of the low key palette. The overall somber tones of the painting--the oyster white and black gown, the dull olive-green wall, the pale violet shadows, and the silver-white peony blossoms--act as a pictorial analogue to the painting's sorrowful theme. Light comes from below and accentuates Isabella's pale throat and arms, the broad curve of the pot which contains her lover's severed head, and the generous swelling curve of her thigh revealed below the gown. The degree of simplification and

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rigorous pictorial structure based on a stylized flowing line and flat planes of color make this work one of Alexander's most complete statements of his decorative style of the 1890s, matched only, perhaps, by Repos of two years earlier. Not surprisingly, the two paintings share many common qualities: an accentuation of the erotic and a sense of languor; an elegant manipulation of flowing lines and curves; and a rigorously controlled tonal palette. The pictorial parallels between Isabella et le pot de basilic and art nouveau stylization were noted in the contemporary critical press as they have been by modern scholars.[10]

The vaguely necrophilic and decadent literary theme of the work may be considered within the broader context of symbolism, although the term itself is of limited usefulness due to the complexity of the international symbolist movement in the 1890s which defies simple definition or categorization. Moreover, contemporary references to this work, without exception, emphasize Alexander's facile manipulation of forms and a low key tonal palette for decorative effect; the meaning of the story, or Alexander's interpretation of it, are not addressed.[11] A tension is established between the quasi-symbolist allusions in this work and Alexander's decorative manipulation of the figure with little apparent regard to the story's content; the decadent literary theme which aligns this work with symbolism is not slavishly followed. Such a key item to the

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narrative as the pot of basil, for example, can be interpreted as an exotic prop, much like the bowls and vases in other paintings by Alexander from this period, which balance the formal composition and have no meaning per se. The fact that the basil itself is cast in shadow further dilutes any direct pictorial link with the narrative.

At the same time, it is unlikely that Alexander's motive in Isabella et le pot de basilic was purely decorative as the painting's link with the narrative was made obvious by the title. The story itself would have been familiar to Alexander's colleagues and to many contemporary Salon visitors. Moreover, the painting had resonances with other works from the period which were imbued with symbolist overtones. It is possible that Alexander was familiar with the Pre-Raphaelite painter William Holman Hunt's (1827-1910) version of the same theme (1867, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England) which was widely disseminated and known through an engraving of the painting published in 1871. Moreover, Hunt's Isabella and the Pot of Basil was exhibited at a retrospective display of Hunt's work at the Fine Art Society in London in March of 1886, the year Alexander was in England painting portraits for the Century Company.[12] As in the painting by Hunt, Alexander's Isabella is depicted standing and embracing the pot whose grisly contents are the source of her sorrow. Furthermore, both works share an element of morbid erotic ambiguity;

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Isabella is both a loved-crazed woman mourning the loss of her lover and a vampirish ghoul coveting the severed head of a man whose lips she has kissed. Bram Dijkstra finds Alexander's Isabella to be only a slightly more sympathetic parallel with "such turn of the century head hunters as Salome and Judith."[13] Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) play Salome may, in fact, have been familiar to Alexander as its publication in 1893 raised much controversy in the French and English periodical press, as did Aubrey Beardsley's (1872-1898) drawing Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist (1893, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey), which was inspired by the play and was reproduced in The Studio the same year.[14]

A more likely pictorial source for Alexander's Isabella may have been Frederick Leighton's (1830-1896) Lachrymae (c. 1895, MMA) which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1895.[15] A narrow vertical format is common to both works as is the standing female figure who leans agains a high shelf. Moreover, in each painting the lachrymose maiden is surrounded by floral symbols which may suggest sensual love, mourning, or death. Both paintings exude an aura of otherwordly, sensuous langour and inanition caused by grief which aligns them with the symbolist mood of the 1890s--a mood which rejected the commonplaces of the contemporary world. Finally, the aesthetic refinement, decorative

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treatment of the figure and her drapery, and a cool tonal palette are common to both paintings.

As in the critical discussions of previous Salons, Alexander's work was considered within the context of the influence of Whistler--one critic labelled Whistler "l'inspirateur universelle"[16]--and in association with other figure and portrait painters of the time whose works were considered to be among the finest at the Nationale's Salon. One critic characterized the works of these artists as variations on the pictorial formula first articulated by Whistler, in particular the use of a unified tonal palette, flat forms, and an emphasis on silhouette. With respect to Alexander's particular variation he wrote, "The extreme and slightly artificial expression of this style of art is provided by Mr. Alexander who is devoted to his search for silhouettes of young women."[17] Another critic found Alexander's novel treatment of movement and undulating line inspired by Whistler and comparable to Aman-Jean's.[18]

Alexander continued to participate in exhibitions outside of Paris in 1897 and early 1898. He displayed works in international exhibitions in Venice, Copenhagen, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, and Brussels that had appeared in previous Salons du Champ-de-Mars.[19] Each of these exhibitions featured works by American artists living abroad --Whistler, Sargent, Alexander Harrison, among them--and by many of Alexander's colleagues from the Nationale with whom

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he was often discussed, including Aman-Jean, Besnard, Guthrie, and Lavery. Indeed, the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts provided a vital model and a roster of eminent artists for many international exhibitions. The parallels between the Nationale and the Salon de la Libre Esthétique, Brussels, where Alexander exhibited for the first time in early spring 1898, is only one example among many. The Salon de la Libre Esthétique shared an endorsement of artistic liberality and modernism with the Nationale in Paris. Moreover, the Brussels Salons were decidedly international in character and exhibited works by prominent French and American expatriate artists, many of whom were members of the Nationale, alongside of the Belgians.[20]

Alexander also began to participate regularly in annual exhibitions in the United States, particularly at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the National Academy of Design, and the Society of American Artists, where he had been elected a member in 1891 but had not exhibited since 1886. Moreover, in 1897 Alexander was named to the Paris foreign advisory committee for the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions, which was responsible for selecting works from Paris for the annual exhibition in Pittsburgh. The committee was made up of other American expatriates and many of Alexander's associates at the Nationale including Puvis-de-Chavannes, Whistler, Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929), Walter Gay, Benjamin-Constant (1845-

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1902), Léon Lhermitte (1844-1925), Charles Sprague Pearce (1851-1914), and Mary Cassatt (1844-1926). Two other foreign advisory committees were established in 1897 in London and Munich. Their panels consisted of many prominent American expatriate and foreign artists, among them, Sargent, Abbey, Frank D. Millet, and James J. Shannon (1862-1923) in London, and J. Frank Currier in Munich.[21]

The first exhibition of the two rival Parisian societies in the Galerie des Machines in the spring of 1898 was greeted with a fervor of critical attention matched only by the widespread enthusiasm and/or dismay when the dissident group broke away from the SAF in 1890. "Le double salon" of the reunited yet still autonomous Sociétés was the subject of numerous articles and reviews, the pages of which were proportional to the immensity of the exhibition. In fact, so many reviews of the exhibition appeared that one critic wrote a lengthy review of the varied and extensive critical responses.[22] The sheer number of works on display was formidable--over 4,000 paintings between the Nationale and the SAF--and more than one critic reported the daunting numbers of works in each Salon. Detailed maps (fig. 58) appeared in several newspapers which were intended to guide the unwary public through the vast display.[23] The building itself, which was large enough to house a dirigible, was the subject of much discussion. Some observers found "l'immense hall" unfavorable for the Salons. For example, one critic

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complained, "The Galerie de Machines did not seem to provide favorable conditions for the Salon of the Champ-de-Mars. Oh no! It is immense, airy, and filled with light, but in excess. It is not an exhibition hall but rather a vast desert under a bell-jar." Others found the potential reunion of the two rivals far outweighed any inherent problems with the exhibition space.[24]

The internationalism of the Nationale's Salon continued to be the subject of much discussion. For example, one critic reported that of the 434 painters exhibiting works at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, 173 were by foreigners, "making the National Society a cosmopolitan society."[25] A British observer, who had a vested interest in supporting the Nationale's manifest internationalism, attributed the success of the 1898 Salon du Champ-de-Mars to the large number of foreign contributions. He said, "In no single section are the French unchallenged by the guests whom they receive in so liberal a spirit, and the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts must reflect with some concern how much would be lost to their exhibition were they deprived of the advantage of foreign intervention."[26]

Of all the foreigners who lent the air of cosmopolitanisme to the Nationale's Salon, it was the Americans who were most widely discussed. Although Whistler's absence was noted by many, the American display was regarded as among the strongest of foreign work

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exhibited and featured works by Alexander, Sargent, Elizabeth Nourse, Melchers, Hassam, Birge Harrison, Humphreys-Johnston, Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (1858-1946), and Julius Stewart (1855-1919). Aesthetic portraiture and figure painting, in which the provocative and pervasive influence of Whistler was most deeply felt, were singled out as the genres in which Americans excelled. Léonce Bénédite, the curator of Paris's museum of contemporary art, the Musée du Luxembourg, praised the American school with Whistler as "son grand directeur de conscience." He continued, "The [American school] has a considerable place in the art of our times. . . . The Americans rapidly assimilated our artistic means, which they have adapted to their own particular expression, and have formed a very active independent school of art which continues to develop quickly."[27] However, not all critics praised Americans' assimilation of French styles and methods. One critic warned, for example, "They [Americans] can almost out-French the French."[28]

Alexander displayed eight paintings at the 1898 Salon du Champ-de-Mars, including female figure subjects, a portrait of a child, and a still-life.[29] It was his largest display since 1895 when he showed ten paintings. Of the three works entitled Portrait, one features a woman shown in three-quarter view with her face turned in profile (fig. 59). She is seated beside a small table, on which she rests her elbow next to a clear slender vase with flowers.

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Her other arm rests against the back of the chair, which is cut off by the edge of the canvas. Her dress is of oyster white satin with highlights of narrow black trim on the bodice and at the shoulders, which are revealed. The large black bow on the dress is balanced against the wide white ribbon with which her black hair is pulled back at the base of her neck. A young child is the subject of another work entitled Portrait (fig. 60). Eleanor Alexander, daughter of Elizabeth Alexander's brother Harry, is shown in profile, crouching before a diminutive wing chair on which her doll sits. Unlike Alexander's typical unmodulated flat background against which he places his figures, there is more visual incident here. In fact, the background fills over half of the composition and contains a large credenza, on top of which are a vase and candelabrum, a curtain to the right, and a chandelier which is cut off by the top of the canvas. The distinctly less aestheticized treatment of the space and dress may be the result of the picture's subject--a portrait of a child--which did not lend itself to Alexander's characteristically decorative manipulation of the female figure.

In Pandore (often exhibited with the English spelling Pandora) (fig. 61), Alexander seems to strain to balance decorative treatment of the figure and gown with narrative implications. A young woman is seated on a banquette in a flowing gown which drapes well over her feet at the floor

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and falls carelessly off her shoulders to reveal her breasts. With one hand she demurely covers her left breast while the other gestures to an intricately carved box--one assumes it is the so-called Pandora's box--which rests inside a niche in the wall. The lighting from below casts an elongated shadow of the head and arms against the wall and column behind her. Pandore owes an obvious debt to Isabella et le pot de basilic in its allusion to a quasi-symbolist theme--each woman is associated with a vessel--and may in fact have been inspired by his success with the earlier work. Here, however, unlike the earlier work, Alexander flounders between narrative and decoration. In contrast to the narrow vertical panel which was a deliberate compositional device in Isabella et le pot de basilic, the horizontal format in Pandore adds little to the decorative treatment of the figure and does not enhance the flow of lines across the surface of the canvas. Moreover, the stagelighting, which Alexander had used so successfully in Isabella et le pot de basilic, lacks compositional value and adds little to the narrative implications in Pandore. Although Pandore was less often discussed and reproduced than Isabella et le pot de basilic, critical response to both paintings was characterized by a concern with formal and aesthetic values and a disregard of narrative or iconographic meaning.[30]

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A far more typical and resolved example of Alexander's decorative style of the period was Le bol bleu (often exhibited with the English title The Blue Bowl) (fig. 62), which utilizes and exaggerates the crouching pose first introduced in Peonies one year earlier (fig. 54). A woman is shown in three-quarter view from the rear, her head turned in profile. In her right hand she holds a white and blue bowl in which she has arranged white rose blossoms. The figure twists in a convoluted movement to look at a single blossom which has fallen to the floor. Although the title of the work is derived from the patterned bowl, the subject of the painting is clearly the dress, which extends beyond the edges of the canvas with its voluminous and elegant flowing lines.[31] The asymmetrical placement of the figure in the canvas creates a strong diagonal axis from bottom left to top right which enlivens the composition and enhances the sense of fluidity and motion across the two-dimensional surface. The awkward placement of the left hand behind the figure, beside another bowl of blossoms, creates another, if less dominant, diagonal axis from the top left corner of the canvas to the fallen rose blossom in the bottom right hand corner. Moreover, the strained posture draws attention to Alexander's willful manipulation of the figure and gown for purely decorative purposes. There is little sense of three-dimensionality in the figure. As one critic later observed, "[Alexander was] content with

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arranging her in a pattern as an entomologist might spread and pin to advantage a golden butterfly on a blue-green ground."[32] This decorative abstraction is further enhanced by a complex pattern of elliptical curves in the bowl the figure holds as well as in the one behind her, the dark wide satin band at her waist and in her hair, and her exposed back and shoulders outlined by the edge of the gown. The floral pattern in green, rose, and blue of the grey-green dress is carried beyond the confines of the canvas to the pressed gilt frame, whose wide borders are decorated with floral arabesques, thus completing the decorative ensemble.[33]

Alexander's manipulation of women as purely decorative objects and his pictorial association of women with nature--flowers in many cases--are other examples of the gender distinction, or the ideology of separate spheres as Bailey Van Hook calls it, operative in his works and those by scores of other artists from the period. Based upon the well established pictorial tradition that equated women with nature and men with culture--for centuries women had been depicted holding a flower or a piece of fruit while men grasped books or other attributes of their profession--artists at the turn of the century often used evocative titles of flowers, birds, or decorative objects for their decorative images of women.[34] Alexander's Peonies, The Blue Bowl, Alfred H. Maurer's (1868-1932) The Peacock (1903,

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PMA), Alice Pike Barney's (1857-1931) Woman and Peacock (NGA), and Robert Reid's Fleur-de-Lys (c. 1899, MMA) and The Yellow Rose (1908, Minneapolis Institute of Arts) are only six examples among many of this practice at the turn of the century. Surely the forms themselves, flowers or peacock feathers for example, were selected for their decorative patterning and curving repetitious forms which lent themselves to two-dimensional stylization as well as for their sensual parallels to a woman's body. At the same time, these pictorial similes demonstrated the pervasiveness of the assumption that women could be neutralized, abstracted, and arranged to be aesthetically decorative; their presence was not vital enough to demand three-dimensional space.

In Le noeud vert (often exhibited with the English spelling The Green Bow) (fig. 63), a woman is shown arranging a green bow in her hair. The figure is standing although her gown is cut off at the bottom and sides by the edges of the canvas. With her arms raised to adjust her hair, the curves of her figure are exaggerated; the tight fitting bodice gives way to a billowing skirt whose abstract linear and floral patterning rests on the surface of the canvas and enlivens the design. In a similar work, The Glass Bowl, c. 1898 (fig. 64), Alexander uses the same three-quarter length panel format as in Le noeud vert. Here, a woman is shown holding a large empty glass bowl in

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her hands at shoulder height. Her head turns away from the viewer, creating an elegant curved diagonal in contrast to the sharp descending line of her left arm crossed over her chest.[35]

Critical response to Alexander's submissions to the 1898 Salon du Champ-de-Mars was largely favorable, particularly among those writers who found the American works at the Salon most distinguished in the category of decorative portraiture and figure painting. Alexander's esteemed position among the finest American expatriate painters in France was noted by one critic who said, "The series of eight portraits, extremely unconventional in pose, original in color, and often exquisite in quality, carry Mr. John Alexander to the first rank of his own line."[36] Other critics, however, found Alexander's manipulation of the gown for decorative effect bordering on mannerism. For example, Elizabeth Pennell described Alexander's works as "amazingly clever, but restless to the point of exasperation."[37] Another critic shared Pennell's sense of fatigue with Alexander's decorative mannerisms yet praised his facility with a low key tonal palette and referred to Alexander as "le yankee raffiné de la palette."[38] Critical opinion notwithstanding, the French government's decision to purchase Le noeud vert for the Musée du Luxembourg in 1898 signalled official recognition of the currency and the excellence of Alexander's work.

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The history of the Musée du Luxembourg and, in particular, its purchases of American works in the 1890s, forms another important chapter in the discussion of the internationalism of American art at the end of the nineteenth century.[39] Indeed, the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris's museum of modern art, was distinguished by its internationalism and its policy of acquiring the widest geographic range of works for its encyclopedic collection of works by living artists. The Musée du Luxembourg was unique in that its collection was designed to present the complexity and richness of contemporary art; works were purchased annually from the Salons and later from artists' studios and commercial galleries. At the same time, it served as a clearing house for works to be permanently accessioned into the Musée du Louvre. As such, the collection was transitory: some works went into the permanent collection; others were withdrawn; still others were placed in provincial galleries or in public buildings. Bénédite, the curator of the Musée du Luxembourg, described the transitory collection: "The Luxembourg . . . is from this point of view an antechamber to the Louvre, the vestibule to that great Pantheon of Art, so that a witty curator said of it not long ago that it was the purgatory of artists."[40]

Purchases of foreign works had been part of Museum's policy since its inception. However, their active and

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systematic acquisition of such works began in 1890, the same year the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts was organized. Although these organizations were clearly separate, their shared agenda of hospitality to foreign work was not entirely coincidental but rather responded to the internationalism of art at the end of the nineteenth century with Paris as its center of activity. This parallel did not go unnoticed in the critical press. In fact, one critic who regularly disparaged the Nationale as the "Salon des étrangers" warned, "The result of this favoritism . . . is that the Musée du Luxembourg is in the process of becoming the Museum of Foreigners in the same manner as the so-called National Society."[41]

The state's purchase of Alexander's Le noeud vert for the Musée du Luxembourg followed a somewhat convoluted course. The only specific reference to the purchase in the Alexander papers suggests that Léonce Bénédite wanted to purchase Isabella et le pot de basilic, but was unable to do so as it had already been purchased for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts by Ernest Longfellow.[42] Bénédite decided to purchase Le noeud vert, with the privilege of exchanging it for a more important painting after looking over the works in Alexander's studio. This chronology of events is corroborated by an undated letter to Alexander from the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, which had the request to purchase Isabella crossed out with the

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note "acquisition not possible."[43] In May of 1898, Alexander had agreed on the sale of Le noeud vert for 1,000 francs. The following October, the committee for the acquisition of works of art decided to exchange Le noeud vert, "une étude moins importante," for Portrait gris, a painting first exhibited at the 1893 Salon du Champ-de-Mars. By December, the exchange had been agreed upon and Portrait gris was officially deposited at the Musée du Luxembourg and, ultimately, into the permanent collection at the Musée du Louvre.[44]

In May of 1898, Alexander participated as an honorary member in the first exhibition of international art organized by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, London. With Whistler as the titular president of the new society and the stylistic mentor of many of the members, the organization referred to itself as "an Art Congress for the artists of the world," and counted among its members many of the most distinguished artists of the time including John Lavery, vice-president of the Society, Guthrie, Shannon, Alexander, Aman-Jean, Besnard, Boldini, Puvis de Chavannes, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Thaulow, and Zorn. The exhibition was held at Prince's Skating Club, Knightsbridge, which had been transformed into an exhibition space, and included 327 paintings. Most works were painted in the last decade but examples of earlier works by Degas, Monet, and Manet, whom the Society selected

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as most influential on contemporary art, were also displayed.[45]

Endorsement of the pervasive impact of Whistler was an unspoken but clear agenda in the Society's organization. In fact, the first exhibition was a showcase of Whistler's work, if on a modest scale. In addition to current works, the exhibition displayed several older paintings by Whistler including Brown and Gold: Portrait of Lady Eden (Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow), the infamous so-called unfinished portrait of Lady Eden, over which Whistler and Sir W. Eden quarrelled publicly and bitterly the previous year.[46] The first three exhibitions of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers were dominated by full-length figure studies of women and aesthetic portraits, many of which owed a debt to Whistler's earlier essays in this area. Alexander, whose aesthetic parallels with Whistler had been firmly established in the critical press in the 1890s, submitted one work to the exhibition, The Green Girl (fig. 65).

The exhibition, dubbed the "London Secession," was roundly acclaimed in the critical press who found it a "great manifestation of unacademic art," where modernity and style prevailed.[47] The internationalism of the Society and its exhibition was recognized as a salient characteristic of the new organization. For example, one critic proclaimed:

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> The International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers thoroughly justifies its title. Each country in which art is really a living power is represented by its most eager exponents. . . . Such an exhibition is valuable in indicating what are the aims and thoughts in art which are current in Western Europe, and how far they are likely to exercise a permanent influence upon art in all countries.[48]

Parallels were drawn between the internationalist agenda of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts and that of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers in the critical press. Moreover, many noted that the installation of the London exhibition was based on the Nationale's example--that is, grouping on artist's work together and allowing ample space between paintings--although on a smaller scale.[49]

Alexander's participation in international exhibitions continued to increase proportionally to the rising number of such displays. In the summer of 1898 he submitted works to the "Secession" exhibition in Munich and the International Exposition in Vienna. The Café, 1898 (fig. 66) may have been included in one of these exhibitions. In this atypical work, Alexander depicts a woman seated in a café before a mirror which reflects her profile and flamboyant hat. The table in front of her blocks any view of her gown. The painting's obvious stylistic and thematic parallels with contemporary French painting, such as works by Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec, are remarkable in this work. Moreover, the café setting, with the attendant still life elements of

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glasses and carafes, has narrative implications that would be more typical in Alexander's later work. However, the low key tonal palette and the emphasis on two-dimensional patterning are consonant with other works by Alexander from the period.[50]

In the winter of 1898-99, Alexander exhibited Portrait (SNBA 1898) and served on the Paris advisory panel of the third annual exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, whose exhibitions were among the most significant international exhibitions at the time.[51] Charles Caffin discussed the vitality and achievements of American art within the international context at the exhibition in Pittsburgh and said:

> The foolish cry was raised in previous years that the introduction of a foreign element was a slight upon American painters. If American art were in its infancy there might be some point in the assertion. The child would feel awed in the presence of the man. But in the same breath is asserted that our native art has passed this stage and can hold its own in the world. If so, why need it fear for competition? As a matter of fact, it need not. It is recognized everywhere as a real force to be reckoned with, and it makes the truth fully felt in the present exhibition.[52]

This assertion of American art's independence from foreign influences would increasingly dominate critical discussions by Caffin and others in the next decade.

The tenth annual exhibition of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in 1899--the second so-called double exposition at the Galerie des Machines--provoked a great deal of discussion about the status of the Nationale and its accomplishments

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during its decade of existence. In fact, a sense of reflection dominated critical discussion in general, not surprising considering the date which marked not only the end of the decade but of the century. In reviewing the ten years of aesthetic battle between the "Old" and the "New" Salon, one critic pronounced the final demise of the SAF Salon:

> The "New" Salon of 1899 is on the whole at least equal to those of the past years, to compare it with them alone. But if we compare it, on the other hand, with the "Old" Salon, and set the best works of each exhibition side by side, we cannot but record in this last year of the century an undoubted victory for the New Salon, and from this point of view 1899 may be regarded as the real date of the decease of the Old Salon.[53]

This sense of confidence in the Nationale's triumph over the SAF, however, was far from unanimous. The death of Puvis de Chavannes, a widely mourned loss, and the subsequent presidency of Carolus-Duran at the Nationale was seen by some as a demonstration of an inexorable shift at the Nationale toward conservatism and away from the endorsement of artistic liberality that had distinguished its previous annual Salons.[54] Others were disappointed at an overwhelming sense of lassitude and unfulfilled promise at both Salons, particularly the Nationale's. Elizabeth Pennell's dismay was palpable when she wrote:

> It is impossible to come away from the latest Salons without feeling a trifle depressed and discouraged. One thinks of the immense activity during the last hundred years, one remembers the endless movements and schools and revolutions that have come and gone since the National Assembly of

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> 1791 made an end for evermore to the old tyranny of the Academy; and then, in the face of this spring's exhibitions, one cannot help thinking to what purpose has been all this agitation, all this energy, all this stirring, all this struggling. A few thousand artists may exhibit in the place of a few hundred a century ago, but the greatness of art depends not in the least upon numbers. Indeed, it is one of the most melancholy features of this huge collection that such acres of canvas and paper, such a wilderness of plaster and marble and bronze, should yield such an absurdly small crop of good, or interesting, or even irritatingly bad work.[55]

In fact, the sheer size of the exhibition was remarked on by many. Maps were again a regular feature of newspaper accounts, intended to guide the hapless salonnier through the vast exhibition. Other writers daunted their readers with tallies of numbers of exhibited works. There were a reported 3,525 paintings in total: 1492 at the Nationale and 2033 at the SAF.[56]

Aesthetic portraits and figure paintings were once again singled out as among the most significant and accomplished works at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, in particular, those by foreign artists. One critic remarked, "At the National Society, the portraits are much more works of art than records of family resemblances. The personality of the model has very little importance."[57] L'école américaine was the largest of the foreign contributors to the Nationale's Salon and was considered by many to be among the finest. One report listed 457 foreign works among the 1492 canvases in the Salon; of those, 143 were by Americans.[58] Although the American display lacked the

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usual contributions by Whistler, Sargent, and Humphreys-Johnston, it included works by Alexander, Gay, Robert Henri, Melchers, Nourse, Mary Fairchild MacMonnies, and Julius Stewart.

Alexander submitted only one work to the 1899 Salon du Champ-de-Mars, Le rayon du soleil (fig. 67).[59] A woman is shown in three-quarter view, leaning over a cello which she plays. The figure is cast in shadow--gold and brown tones dominate the composition--while a brilliant ray of yellow sunlight illuminates her bare left arm, which rests on the neck of the cello, and the upper curve of the cello itself. As the figure leans down with her right arm to cross the strings of her cello with the bow, her head is thrown back, creating an elongated flowing line from the top to the bottom of the canvas, while adding an element of sensuality and heightened emotion to the composition. The cello is both the object of the sitter's attention and an elegant visual form whose languorous curves match those of its player. Moreover, the evocative association between music and art is alluded to pictorially; the harmonies of the warm tones are analogous to minor strains in music. Of this parallel, one critic noted, "The painting itself, if I can say, is musical; the ray of sunlight, like the bow, evokes a low-pitched and muted vibration from the strings cast in shadow."[60]

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Alexander's return to the theme of women and music provides the opportunity to examine the refinement of his decorative style from earlier works of a similar theme: Le piano (fig. 36) and Panel for a Music Room (fig. 37). As in Le piano, Alexander depicts a single figure and her instrument in Le rayon du soleil. The elegant curve of the cello, as of the piano in the earlier work, is a clear pictorial analogue to the female figure. In Le rayon du soleil the element of eroticism in heightened by the placement of the cello between the woman's legs and by her posture. Her thrown back head creates an elegant elongated curve and has associations with sensual abandonment and pleasure. In contrast to the narrow horizontal format in Panel for Music Room, which was a deliberate compositional strategy that underscored the two-dimensional pictorial design and the movement of forms across the surface of the canvas, Le rayon du soleil exhibits a less rigorous pictorial structure. The inclusion of a ray of sunlight and its use as the title of the later work indicate a subtle shift in the direction of Alexander's decorative style. In earlier works the low key tonal palette was bathed in an even light which tended to flatten forms, but here the sunlight creates dramatic contrasts of darks and lights, not unlike his works painted in Munich in the late 1870s. Moreover, there is a greater sense of three-dimensionality. The new interest in the effects of sunlight on a figure may

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reflect Alexander's response to Impressionism, which by the 1890s was a standard feature of nearly every exhibition internationally.[61] However, as Alexander never displayed a sustained interest in painting out-of-doors nor in a high key prismatic palette, his association with Impressionism is at best a diluted one. What is certain is that Alexander's work was becoming increasingly engaged with the visual world rather than with the rigorously controlled aesthetic interiors which had formed the cornerstone of his work earlier in the decade. Although this shift away from aestheticism to naturalism is only hinted at in Le rayon du soleil, Alexander's paintings grew increasingly responsive to the visual world after his repatriation in 1901. The gradual dissolution of his decorative style was proportional to these changes.

Critical opinion of Alexander's sole submission to the 1899 Salon du Champ-de-Mars was generally favorable. Alexander's esteemed position at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts and by extension within the contemporary international art arena was noted by one critic who asked, "Who is not familiar with these feminine notations by the American Alexander, whose charming arrangements, unusual colors, and movements are as unexpected as they are perfect? La femme au violoncelle, which he exhibits, is worthy of his former Salon submissions."[62] Elizabeth Pennell was one of the few critics to notice a change and, in her view, a

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slackening in Alexander's decorative style. Moreover, she found Alexander's submission to the 1899 Salon du Champ-de-Mars demonstrative of what she perceived as a general degradation into mannerism, a perfunctory reliance on formula, and a feebleness on the part of even the best artists at the Nationale: Aman-Jean, Blanche, de la Gandara, among them. She complained, "Mr. Alexander's ingenuity seems to be failing him, for his favorite model appears but upon one canvas, there twisted in a new and graceful curve over a violoncello. . . . Even the sensationalists have come to an end of their resources."[63]

Alexander's submissions to international exhibitions in 1899 were far fewer than in previous years. For example, he did not submit work to the fourth annual exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, although he continued to serve on its Paris foreign advisory board.[64] He did participate, however, in the quadrennial exhibition in Ghent, Belgium. This exhibition, in many ways, paralleled that of the Nationale in Paris, particularly in its internationalism, its endorsement of artistic liberality, and its innovative installation designs.[65] The parallels between the Ghent Salon and the Nationale in Paris did not escape the notice of critics. With respect to the Ghent exhibition one critic remarked, "The Salon du Champ-de-Mars of this year reappears here." Another labelled the exhibition "le Salon des étrangers."[66] Alexander exhibited two works at the Ghent

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Salon, Le printemps, panneau (probably fig. 41) and Repos (fig. 38), and was in the company of several of his European and American colleagues from the Nationale including Blanche, Charles Cottet (1863-1924), Gay, Guthrie, Alexander Harrison, Humphreys-Johnston, Hitchcock, Lavery, Melchers, Thaulow, and Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945).[67]

The first full-length articles on Alexander's work appeared in 1899 and 1900. Each provided a narrative of Alexander's career, identified basic characteristics of his decorative style, and reproduced numerous works. Moreover, they provided a range of critical opinion that attested to the vitality, the stature, and the international currency of Alexander's style; two of the three articles were written by prominent French aestheticians of the time.

Harrison S. Morris (1856-1948), novelist, art critic, and managing director of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, identified Alexander's search for the decorative as the primary motive and the most distinguished feature in his work. Moreover, Morris aligned Alexander's decorative style, with its emphasis on elegant pictorial structure and on picture-making, within the mainstream of modernism. He wrote, "The aim of Alexander is decorative and constructive, rather than interpretive. . . . Alexander's habit is to see life as art, not as ethics, and he embodies his impressions in a candid language of the brush which there is no mistaking."[68] Morris discussed three traits in Alexander's

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portraits and figure paintings--"quality of line, candor of impression, and novelty of tone"--which formed the basis of Alexander's decorative style. To Morris, Alexander's subtle handling of line in the sweeping folds of a woman's gown was the most fully developed trait of the three.[69] He likened Alexander's aptitude for defining beauty by line to contemporary artists and decorators including Aubrey Beardsley, Jules Cheret, and Whistler, among others, and traced the roots of this decorative method to Japanese art. "Candor of impression" referred to Alexander's decorative motive, which was pictorial rather than interpretive. Unlike portraitists whose aim was to reveal the soul of the sitter, or at least to interpret fundamental characteristics of the personality, Alexander subordinated reality to a decorative instinct in his aim to adorn. His candid impressions of the sitter transformed her into a decorative object. According to Morris, "There is no burrowing in the heart; all is frank lively enjoyment of external character."[70] Finally, in discussing Portrait gris, the work purchased by the French government for the Musée du Luxembourg, Morris advised Americans to support native art, lest its finest accomplishments distinguish permanent collections outside of the United States.

In the introduction of his sketch on Alexander for an American audience in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Armand Dayot, French art critic, historian, and inspector general

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of Fine Arts, cited Whistler, Sargent, Dannat, and Alexander as the most brilliant exemplars of contemporary painting of the modern woman. Of the four artists, Dayot said, "No one excelled him [Alexander] in rhythm of pose and graceful feminine attitudes, no one understood better than he the direct art of values and harmonious contrasts."[71] Dayot cited Alexander's portraits of Thaulow and Whitman as proof of his versatility and ability to reveal personality. However, it was in his images of women that Dayot found Alexander at his most expressive and essentially modern. Dayot discussed Alexander's Isabella et le pot de basilic and Pandore; he considered them to be both the quintessential expressions of his decorative style if perhaps less well-known than his portraits in America. He wrote:

> In them we find what seems to us the same preoccupation to make the study of line and a skillful juxtaposition of harmonious colors the chief means of producing his effect. . . . These qualities characterize not alone these purely imaginative compositions, but are to be found in all his portraits, imparting to them an interest as complete arrangements quite independent of their value as likenesses. His desire seems ever to avoid as far as possible the purely conventional presentation of his sitters, and he naturally finds this easiest in his portraits of women.[72]

Dayot concluded that Alexander excelled in his decorative arrangements of line and harmonious color where the value of the figure was pictorial rather than representational.

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Gabriel Mourey (1865-1943), the distinguished French art critic and writer, discussed Alexander as "an American in Paris" in an article in International Studio, to which he contributed several studies of contemporary American and French artists.[73] Mourey discussed Alexander's work as both "decorative" and "intensely modern." With respect to what he called "the decorative feeling" in Alexander's work, Mourey wrote:

> Apart from all question of colour, this attribute is clearly seen (to my eyes, at any rate) even in photographs of his paintings. I recognize therein that sense of synthesis, that regard for simplicity, that striving to invest every figure with some special quality other than that which is apparent to all at first sight, that sane logical method of composition which belongs by right to the decorative painter.[74]

Mourey had a vested interest in acknowledging the role of Paris in the evolution and refinement of Alexander's decorative style as Alexander was one of the city's most renowned expatriate artists. He asked, "But would he [Alexander] have triumphed had he not mingled in our artistic movement; had he not become imbued with the concentrated beauties of the European galleries; had he not felt the fascination of our old French civilization? Would he have gained the mastery he possesses over his art? One may well doubt it."[75] However, Mourey commended Alexander for maintaining ties with his own country during his expatriate years, and thus avoiding the disadvantages of becoming "altogether déraciné." According to Mourey,

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Alexander's maintenance of contacts and periodic returns to the United States allowed him to develop under the best of both worlds and to remain "truly American" within a thriving international community.[76] Mourey's high estimation of Alexander's work continued after the turn-of-the-century. In 1902 he included an essay on Alexander in a book-length study on various contemporary artists, many of whom had been Alexander's associates at the Nationale including Rodin, Aman-Jean, Helleu, Thaulow, and Cottet. Alexander was the only American discussed.[77]

Although each writer had his own critical agenda and emphasis, a discussion of the currency and the vivaciousness of Alexander's decorative style was common to all three articles. Distinctions between his portraits of men and women were addressed by each writer. The former were acknowledged as indicative of the breadth and versatility of Alexander's talent; the latter were unanimously seen as his most characteristic. Moreover, all three writers addressed Alexander's modern tendencies as expressed in his emphasis on the pictorial and the decorative rather than on the interpretive or the representational. Finally, Mourey's allusion to Alexander's expression of American qualities within an international context looked forward to the complex issue of defining and identifying an American iconography and style which would concern artists and writers alike after the turn of the century. Alexander's

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search for a compromise style that would accommodate his decorative tendencies and a so-called national expression would characterize his work after his repatriation in late 1901.

The 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle ushered in the twentieth century with a grand style. An extensive building program, in preparation for the Exposition, had been underway since the mid-1890s and included the construction of the Grand and Petit Palais and the Pont Alexandre III. The grounds for the immense exposition covered several city blocks, and during its opening from May 1 to November 15, over 50 million people were reported to have visited it.[78] The vast display of fine arts included three separate exhibitions: a retrospective exhibition of French art from 1800 to 1899 (l'Exposition centennale de l'art français) and the exhibition of contemporary art of the last decade (l'Exposition décennale des beaux-arts, 1889 à 1900) were held at the Grand Palais; an historical exhibition of French art (l'Exposition rétrospective de l'art français des origines à 1800) was held at the Petit Palais. The Décennale was an international exhibition and separated work into l'école français and les écoles étrangères.[79] Among the more than 25 countries that comprised les écoles étrangères, the United States presented the largest exhibition, including 352 paintings by approximately 220

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artists.[80] Moreover, the number of American artists awarded medals was second only to France. This number reflected both the size of the American display and the quality of the works presented.[81]

In striking contrast to the American display at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, which marked the triumph of American art's internationalism in general and the expatriate movement in particular, the demonstration of "nationalism" within an international context was the agenda of the American art display at the 1900 Exposition, although the paintings themselves were not fundamentally different from those displayed in 1889. Decorative and/or academic figure paintings predominated as they had in the earlier display. This shift in priorities was most clear in the official discourse on the two exhibitions. The Director General of the Paris Exposition of 1889 extolled the United States section as "a brilliant annex to the French section" and concluded, "It would be difficult to mention many men who do not draw their inspiration directly from French masters."[82] In his prefatory statement to the official catalogue of the American fine arts exhibit of 1900, H. Hobart Nichols, a member of the United States Commission of Fine Arts of the Exposition, stated its divergent objectives clearly. "In forming the present exhibition, the object of the Director of Fine Arts has been to place before this

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conclave of nations a truly representative American exhibition."[83]

In order to distinguish the present exhibition from its predecessor and to legitimize the fundamentally national rather than international agenda of the American display at the 1900 Exposition, Nichols detailed the rapid progress of American art in the past decade, in particular the growth of educational institutions which were now fully capable of training American artists at home. He stated with confidence:

> Since the Exposition of 1889 American art has to a great degree emancipated itself from foreign trammels, and entered upon a career of its own--expressing American thought and reflecting American nature. Today we have many well-equipped institutions in which the student can develop an artistic temperament on his native soil, in which individuality is recognized and encouraged, while the necessary methods of expression are being learned.[84]

Nichols strained to define this so-called "national art" other than its being produced in America and its being expressive of what he called "a strong note of originality." At the same time, his statement alluded to a fundamental and complex shift in the direction of and priorities in American art, which no longer relied exclusively upon Europe for aesthetic tutelage and artistic subject matter.[85] The recognition of aesthetic resources in America, both in training and in subject matter, and a growing awareness of and a desire for a national identity fueled this rise of nationalism which would ultimately spell the demise of the

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expatriate movement and the internationalism of American art.

The critical press continued to be engaged with les écoles étrangères, in particular that of the United States, much as they had been throughout the 1890s in discussions of the exhibitions of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. Although assessments of the Exposition varied, the issue of nationalism was widely discussed and, in fact, dominated discussion of the American display. Although no clear definition of nationalism was forthcoming, most critics acknowledged both American art's considerable debt to the French and its nascent liberation from previous dependence.

In a lengthy discussion of la peinture étrangère, Léonce Bénédite characterized the American school as follows:

> If one examines the biographical index at the beginning of the catalogue of the American section, one can verify yet again the close rapport of their school of art with ours. Holland, Bavaria, and England sometimes, but France above all has been the country where American artists have developed. . . . We may also consider, with some pride, this rich and vigorous school of art, for whom ours has been the mentor and continues to be their nourishment. But the most interesting phenomenon to note is the beginning of their tentative but decisive emancipation.[86]

L. de Fourcaud, who had often deprecated l'école américaine in reviews of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, found the American display at the 1900 Exposition worthy of praise, in particular its artists whose works were painted in "la terre

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natale." He discussed American art's growing independence from foreign influence and quoted an often-repeated criticism of American art--"it has been said before that American could have artists but it could never have an art"[87]--inorder to disclaim its currency. De Fourcaud was unwilling to grant American art a strong degree of originality and said, "Surely one wouldn't pretend that this ensemble demonstrates a profoundly unified and distinctly original school of art, but at least it demonstrates an organized school that is aware of its own identity." However, he did acknowledge American art's ascendancy and concluded, "The American school of art will probably play one day--and maybe sooner that one imagines--an important role."[88] Such restrained praise characterized the discussion of l'école américaine of Georges Lafenestre who said:

> The majority of [American painters] still bear the mark of their European training . . . especially French, but they are beginning to liberate themselves from this influence. . . . It is one of the foreign schools that, during the past twenty years, has experienced the quickest and most decisive progress; it is not long before American painting, quite liberated and independent, will become one of the vital elements in art around the world.[89]

In contrast to the French commentators who had a vested interest in asserting the vital role that French art played in the development of American art, American critic Ellis Clarke broadly condemned the American display at the 1900 Exposition as distinctly "un-national" and un-American."[90]

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Clarke identified expatriatism as the main cause of the protracted "alien element" in American art; the consequent dominance of foreign influence condemned American art to imitation and to lack of genuine feeling. He warned, "The American artist, when he renounces home scenes and familiar faces and ambitiously undertakes to interpret the world, courts a danger and jeopardizes his art."[91] Clarke strongly advised a commitment to American scenes painted in the United States as the basis for the development of a genuine American art and concluded, "Extensive, varied, magnificent as is the American art exhibit at Paris, rich as it is in evidence of personal ability, this, therefore, is its lesson: Expatriation is a mistake, both as regards the future of the individual artist and as regards the future of American art."[92] Although Elizabeth Pennell was less intransigent in her discussion of the American display, she likewise found the work of the expatriates generally disappointing and devoid of genuine feeling.[93] Moreover, Pennell discussed the diminished importance of aesthetic portraiture, which lacked any topical or so-called national reference, and the consequent increasing validity of identifiably "native" landscape painting. This shift in her critical posture is notable and reflects her response to the current critical debate on nationalism in American art.

Alexander's participation in the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, both as an exhibitor and as a juror, signalled

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the high water mark of his international achievements and acclaim.[94] Alexander exhibited three works painted in Paris in 1899 and 1900--La mère, c. 1900, Portrait de Rodin, 1899, and Automne, 1900--all of which were discussed in the critical press.[95] He received a gold medal for Automne, a distinction that highlighted the achievements of his truly international career in Paris and confirmed his eminent stature among the Franco-American painters of the period.

Portrait de Rodin (fig. 68) was painted in Rodin's studio in Paris in the winter of 1899.[96] Rodin is shown standing in three-quarter view from the left side, surrounded by a great expanse of largely unmodulated background. His gaze is focused on a small piece of sculpture which he holds in his hands. A green-grey tonality dominates the canvas whose coarse surface is revealed through the thin washes of color. The only highlights of contrasting color are the white shirt collar, the pearl white folds of a cloth on the bottom left side of the composition, and the red rosette pin of the Legion d'Honneur in Rodin's lapel. Although one critic found Alexander's use of a dominant, somber tone derivative of Whistler and largely unsuccessful,[97] most praised the painting's decorative quality. Bénédite, for example, referred to Alexander as "un beau décorateur" whose use of thin, tonal washes on coarse grain canvas, lack of detail, and rapid brushwork resembled the effect of fresco

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painting.[98] The restrained decorative treatment of Rodin was consonant with Alexander's portraits of men in general which emphasized the depiction of character over decorative pictorial design. Moreover, this work may be considered within the sub-genre of Alexander's portraits of fellow (male) artists, a practice he began in Munich in the 1870s and continued, off and on, for the rest of his career.

Automne (fig. 69), painted in the spring of 1900, is an ambitious two-figure composition. This modern allegory of autumn features two women in Alexander's signature flowing garments. The decorative effect of sinuous line enlivens the composition and unifies its two-dimensional design. A complex pattern of horizontals, verticals, diagonals, and ovals is contained within the overall low key tonal palette, which led one critic to suggest, "One thinks at first blush of old tapestries."[99] Similarly, Pennell remarked that Automne "had the quality of a tapestry rather than a painting."[100] The lighting comes from below and highlights the pale skin of the figures' forearms, chests, and necks. Each figure's head arches backward, elongating the neck and adding an element of chastened sensuality. The figure on the right gestures toward her face with semi-closed eyelids and parted lips, while her other hand gestures toward her breast. The billowing gowns seem to lift the figures in a tempestuous swirl and the roughly textured background adds to the sense of swirling movement.

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The theme of La mère (fig. 70), which depicts a young woman seated in profile on a sofa next to her sleeping child, is unusual in Alexander's oeuvre as it falls outside his repetoire of decorative female figures and has narrative implications which he typically eschewed. Certainly Alexander was familiar with paintings on the theme of woman and child by his American expatriate colleagues Mary Cassatt and Elizabeth Nourse, the latter of whom was a regular contributor to the annual Salons of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. Alexander's painting, however, lacks the psychological presence of Cassatt's figures and the intimacy and tenderness of Nourse's.[101] Unlike the overtly decorative treatment of the gowns in Automne, the woman's gown in La mère is incidental and inactive. Moreover, the woman occupies only a small portion of the canvas.

Alexander's submissions to the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle provide a gauge of the direction of his search for the decorative. Rodin, the first male portrait Alexander exhibited in Paris since 1894, recalls Alexander's earlier essays into male portraiture where the decorative impulse is muted in favor of depiction of character. Male portraiture had been the mainstay of Alexander's production in the 1880s and would again occupy his attention after the turn of the century. Automne exhibits many of the qualities associated with Alexander's mature decorative style: facile treatment of elegant flowing lines and a low key tonal

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palette. Moreover, the subcurrent of eroticism was seen in some of Alexander's earlier works of the 1890s. What is different in this work is the composition which lacks a coherent pictorial structure. The apparent weightlessness of the two figures is matched by the slackening attention to two-dimensional design. Finally, the introduction of sentimentality and the suggestion of subject matter at the expense of decorative treatment of the pictorial surface in La mère anticipate what would become an increasingly dominant trend in Alexander's works after the turn of the century.

Alexander participated in only one other exhibition in Paris in 1900, that of the Société Nouvelle de Peintres et de Sculpteurs, whose premiere exhibition was held at Galerie Georges Petit March 10 through 31.[102] Alexander was one of the three Americans included in this Société of twenty well-known and highly successful artists, all of whom were members of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts.[103] The Société Nouvelle's distinguished president, Gabriel Mourey, described the artistic affinity between its members as the guiding force of the new organization. He said simply, "In a word, artistic camaraderie; that is the raison d'être of our group."[104]

The exhibition was restrained in size--just over sixty works of art were displayed--but not in quality. Nearly unanimous favorable critical response applauded both the

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individual works in the exhibition and the display as a whole. For example, one critic remarked:

> One is familiar with the common reproach directed at small exhibitions; they lack any sense of unity or raison d'être; they demonstrate only a heterogeneous group of unrelated talents. . . . This time, due to exceptionally good luck, a group of painters and sculptors have come together with a cohesive and unified objective. . . . The credit for this initiative belongs to M. Gabriel Mourey, one of the finest aestheticians of our time; one must acknowledge him for having created this small and perfectly harmonious salon.[105]

Alexander exhibited six paintings at the premiere Salon of the Société Nouvelle: three figure compositions, one still life, a landscape, and a seascape. Marine (fig. 71), painted in Paris in the winter of 1900, is a nearly abstract study of tonality; the dull-green waves, grey-gold sky, and rose clouds rest on the surface of the canvas, whose coarse grain is revealed through thin washes of color. Although such an abstraction was one possible outcome of Alexander's search for the decorative, he would never take the leap into true abstraction. In Fleurs (fig. 72), painted in 1899, a standing woman is shown leaning over a table to smell a bouquet of peonies.[106] The pictorial association of women and flowers and of women and mirrors had been essayed by Alexander, and many of his contemporaries, during this period. In this work, however, Alexander conflates the two themes. The reflective surface of the table provides a double image of the flowers, whose sensuous curving forms are paralleled in the woman's figure, and emulates a round

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mirror into which the woman gazes. The figure, which Alexander adjusts to its most decorative potential, dominates the somewhat unusual composition. The sweeping, flowing lines of the gown are matched by the elegant and slender cabriolets of the table, while the table's surface reflects the swan-like neck of the figure and the hand, which forms an arch as it rests at the table's edge. Light comes in from the right through an open door behind the table, highlighting the edges of the white and rose petals and the figure's profile. A palette of muted greens and golds dominates the composition. The greater definition of three-dimensional space and the depiction of sunlight on a figure indoors look forward to pictorial strategies Alexander would use extensively in his work after returning to the United States.

Alexander spent the summer of 1900 in Edinburgh, where he stayed at the home of John James Cowan (1846-1932), an art collector who had patronized Whistler. Cowan was familiar with Alexander's work in the annual Salons of the Nationale--in fact, he had purchased Alexander's Devant la glace of 1894 from the Salon--and invited Alexander to spend the summer at his home and paint portraits of his daughters.[107] That summer, Alexander also painted a portrait of John Cowan (fig. 73), which Cowan reported to have been completed in three sittings.[108]

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In the winter of 1901, Alexander did not exhibit at the Fifth Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, although he served on its Paris advisory board. However, he displayed eleven paintings at the 70th annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, including Portrait de Rodin, and Portrait of a Young Girl. Following his triumph at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, Alexander was accorded the privilege of displaying his paintings in a group, an exhibition policy not commonly practiced at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.[109]

The exhibition was widely regarded as one of the Academy's finest, in particular in its display of contemporary trends in American art. In contrast to the international display recently held at the Carnegie Institute, the Academy's exhibition, organized by managing director Harrison S. Morris, was self-consciously "national" and was dominated by works made in the United States. Out of approximately 125 contributors, just over thirty gave foreign addresses. With respect to this nationalist agenda, one critic noted, "The management of the Academy would doubtless be loath to adopt a policy of exclusion as regards foreign productions, but it does tacitly favor home artists and prefers to have its exhibitions dominated, as is the case this year, by home work."[110] After acknowledging the historical importance of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in the development of American art, the same

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critic concluded, "Apart from any consideration of individual artists, the exhibition has a special significance. It is a witness of the gradual but pronounced improvement of American art, and is therefore, prophetic of the exalted rank native artists as a class will ultimately enjoy."[111] Alexander's display of works painted in Paris in an exhibition with a clearly nationalistic agenda marked the liberality on the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts whose response to the current resurgence of nationalism in American art was not intransigent or reactionary. At the same time, the accommodation of Alexander's internationally current decorative style within the discourse of nationalism alluded to the direction of his art after his repatriation in 1901.

Shortly after Alexander's display at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, he received yet another honor, winning the Carnegie Prize at the 23rd Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists. Alexander exhibited three works--Flowers, A Ray of Sunlight, and Autumn--all of which he had exhibited at least once before, two of which had been awarded prizes.[112] The Carnegie Prize of $500, offered for the first time at the Society of American Artists 23rd Annual, was awarded to Autumn, for which Alexander had already received a gold medal at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. One critic asked, "Was it a coincidence or a bit of courtly thoughtfulness that made the jury award the

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Carnegie Prize to a Pittsburgh artist? However that may be, it was fairly won."[113] Indeed, the receipt of such a prestigious "national" award following the highest recognition in the international art arena may have played a role in Alexander's decision to return permanently to the United States in late 1901.[114]

Nowhere was the growing concern with nationalism and the articulation of a distinctly American language of art made more clear than at the Pan-American Exposition held in Buffalo May 1 to November 1, 1901. In a report to William A. Coffin, Director of Fine Arts of the Pan-American Exposition, the jury of awards stated, "The present Exposition is the most complete and representative exhibition of American art ever got together."[115] Indeed, the exhibition, with over 650 American participants, was designed to be the largest presentation of American art ever held in the United States, with the exception of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. An appropriation by the New York State Legislature of $5,800,000.00, secured by the United States Congress, marked the Exposition as a "national" investment, literally and figuratively.[116] Although the exhibition's title and the inclusion of one gallery of works by Canadian artists and a handful of works by South American artists made an allusion to the displays' comprehensiveness beyond the United States, it was largely proforma. As Charles Caffin noted, "In the picture

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exhibition of the Pan-American there is very little representation of the Pan."[117]

A clear definition of what made American art American, outside of the overly simplistic notion of residency, remained elusive despite the rhetoric of nationalism that informed the agenda of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition. While it was true that many American expatriate artists had returned home by the turn of the century and that the number of American artists travelling to Europe for extended periods of training was dramatically lower than a decade earlier, most of the gold medalists at the Exposition had had significant tenures in Europe, particularly Paris. And while more and more artists were painting so-called American subjects on American soil, decorative and/or academic figure painting was a prominent feature of the Exposition much as it had been at American displays at the Paris Salons throughout the 1890s. By the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, native landscape painting would reemerge as a definitive American theme and subject. In 1901, however, this trend was nascent only and the on-going debate on what made American art American offered few clear answers.

The nationalist agenda of the Pan-American Exposition and its intention of illustrating the rapid development of the so-called "native" American art was the subject of lengthy critical discussions. Analyzing the complex history

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of the development of American art and the impact of international influences that dominated the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Caffin defined the term "native" as applied to American art:

> Certainly, until the recent Exposition in Paris he [the censorious critic] would have said that he was unaware of the existence of an American art; that, no doubt, there were American painters in Paris, London, and elsewhere, but that, for the most part, they seemed to identify themselves with the influences around them and represented nothing American, unless it were a quickness and voracity of assimilation. The Exposition last year, however, demonstrated to the foreigner that there was a considerable body of painters on this side of the water also; and in that sense, at least, the term "native" is justifiable--art has its roots in this country and provisions for development. Whether this native plant has characteristics distinctly American is another matter.[118]

Caffin's discussion proposed residency--that is, work made in the United States--as a rather simplistic definition of native American art yet fell short of identifying "American" characteristics other than an increasing sense of originality and a coincident liberation from foreign influences. He concluded, "In fact, a general summary is this, that the best of our painters abroad preserve their individuality, and that a much larger number at home, partly due to their separation from direct contact with European thought . . . are in no sense plagiarists."[119]

Kenyon Cox, who was an exhibitor and served on the Jury of Awards for the Division of Fine Arts of the Pan-American Exposition, wrote a lengthy review of the exhibition,

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concentrating on the works of American figure painters. After acknowledging the exhibition's thorough representation of the development and richness of American art in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, he drew the following general conclusions: "The first of these is that the standard of excellence attained by American painters is, both absolutely and relatively, a very high one; the second, even more satisfactory, that the aim of American painters is almost uniformly artistic."[120] Charles DeKay praised the Pan-American Exposition as "a more comprehensive and promising exhibition than we have ever had before," and went a step farther than Cox by defining it as proof of America's aesthetic independence.[121] Defining "native" American art as work created by artists in America, DeKay compared it with works by Americans abroad and found the former remarkable for both "originality and imagination," while the latter reflected the internationally current ascendancy of technique over subject matter. A clear definition of distinctly American characteristics which would sustain and enhance the development of a distinctly national art eluded DeKay, much as it did Caffin. Their discussions, however, began to articulate the dissolution of internationalism of American art at the turn of the twentieth century and the consequent ascendancy of nationalism.

Alexander's complex relationship to and expression of the fundamental shift in American art from internationalism

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to nationalism is paradigmatic of this complicated movement as a whole. The international context, in which Alexander flourished, provided the foil against which nationalism would and could evolve. After nearly a quarter of a century of American art's engagement with and emulation of international art trends and practices, American art had come of age and was prepared, for the first time, to generate an artistic dialogue that was both vital and self-referential. While foreign training was de rigueur for American artists in the 1870s and 1880s to learn academic techniques, find exotic and artistic subject matter, and become fluent with internationally current art practices in order to compete with foreign artists for patronage, vastly improved art conditions in the United States by the turn of the twentieth century diminished the urgency of extended European study and travel. Moreover, the desire to imprint a distinctly national voice on American art inspired American expatriate artists to return home. Alexander's decision to return permanently to the United States in 1901 was his most striking response to these changes. Elizabeth Alexander later recalled Alexander's motive in repatriating, "My husband came back to America because he felt that being an American he must do what he could to advance American art. He thoroughly believed in it, but thought that it must be robbed of its foreign atmosphere to be, so to speak, worthwhile."[122] Alexander's gradual yet determined shift

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away from internationalism and toward nationalism was paralleled in American art as a whole which struggled to define itself in the first years of the twentieth century.

Alexander submitted three of his best known and celebrated paintings from the past five years to the Pan-American Exposition: A Ray of Sunlight, Autumn, and Child with Doll, for which he was awarded a gold medal.[123] Caffin's critique was consonant with his previous discussions of Alexander's work--he emphasized Alexander's distinctly decorative motive and artistic individuality--yet it took on added meaning in this context, as individuality was presented as a so-called "American" characteristic.[124] DeKay similarly disassociated Alexander from the "foreign brigade" and characterized his individual decorative style as native rather than international.[125] Only Cox resisted the temptation to embrace Alexander within the less than precisely defined realm of "native" American art, discussing instead his talent as "unmistakably of a decorative order." He described Alexander's decorative motive:

> His mere technique, with his fondness for rough and absorbent grounds on which color is lightly dragged, gives a tapestry-like flatness to his pictures; while his conception of drawing and modelling are subordinate to a few sweeping curves and a few broad patches of color is that of an ornamental designer. His most characteristic works say nothing, pretend to nothing, struggle with nothing; two or three lines interestingly arranged, two or three tones knowingly combined, and it is enough.[126]

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The continued currency of Alexander's decorative style was reaffirmed by awards, both internationally and nationally, at the turn of the century. However, critical discussion of his work in particular, and of American art in general, began to articulate incipient changes in the direction of American art. The dissolution of internationalism, the context within which Alexander articulated his decorative style, and the consequent ascendancy of nationalism within a distinctly American context, represented a fundamental shift in priorities in American art. Alexander's search for the decorative had led him to an international arena where he flourished in the 1890s and established the reputation upon which the rest of his career would be based. His repatriation in 1901 marked a turning point in that search. His attempts to accommodate and adapt the vocabulary of his decorative style to a new interest in nationalism characterized his work for the remainder of his career.

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ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 4

1. Alexander was named Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur January 27, 1901. The dossier on this decree is in the Centre du Documentation, Musée de la Légion d'Honneur, Paris, dossier number 8017.

2. For a discussion of the decline of the expatriate movement in the late 1890s and turn of the twentieth century, see Michael Quick, American Expatriate Painters of the Late Nineteenth Century (Dayton: Dayton Art Institute, 1976), pp. 43-44.

3. "Comme toujours, beaucoup d'exposants abusent du doit du multiplier leurs toiles et couvrent des grandes surfaces de petits panneaux insignificants." M. de Fourcaud, "Salon du Champ-de-Mars," Le Gaulois (April 23, 1897): 1 supplément.

4. See respectively Henry Hamel, "Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars," La France (April 24, 1897): 4; and N. N. "The Two Salons," The Nation 64 (June 10, 1897): 432. See also M. H. Spielmann, "The Paris Salons: At the Champ-de-Mars," Magazine of Art 20 (September 1897): 233.

5. H. Heathcote Statham, "The Paris Salons," Fortnightly Review 61, no. 366 (June 1897): 946.

6. "Pourquoi la Société qui fait la Salon du Champ-de-Mars s'appelle Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts? Elle devrait s'appeler le Salon des étrangers. Il s'en trouve une bonne moitié sur la quantité des exposants. On ne saura jamais le tort que, pécuniarment, cette exposition fait à nos peintres français. À ce point de vue la scission a un résultat extrèment néfaste." Hamel, "Champ-de-Mars," (April 24, 1897): 4.

7. Alexander exhibited La robe jaune, La robe noire, Le chat noir, Pivoines (illustrated page 19), and Isabella et le pot de basilic (catalogue numbers 9 - 13 respectively). See Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1897. Catalogue Illustré (Paris: E. Bernard et Cie, 1897). Pivoines, La robe jaune, and Le chat noir (with the titles Peonies, Yellow Girl, and Red and Black) were exhibited at the First Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, November 1896 - January 1, 1897.

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8. According to Elizabeth Alexander, the model for this work was Juliette Very, a French model whom Alexander used repeatedly from 1897 until his return to the United States in 1901, Lockman interview, frames 185-86.

9. The lines of poetry are from verses 50 and 51. See "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil," in Francis T. Palgrave, editor, The Poetical Works of John Keats (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), pp. 183-99.

10. For example, William H. Gerdts referred to this work as "the American masterwork of Art Nouveau painting," in idem, Revealed Masters, 19th Century American Art (New York: The American Federation of Arts, 1974), p.32.

11. For a discussion of Symbolism in American art, see Charles C. Eldredge, American Imagination and Symbolist Painting (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979). See also From Realism to Symbolism. Whistler and His World (Philadelphia and New York: Philadelphia Museum of Art and Columbia University, Department or Art History and Archeology, 1971). Contemporary critical discussions of Alexander's Isabella et le pot de basilic, without exception, consider aesthetic and formal issues; references to the painting's iconography or literary source, other than a simple citation, are conspicuously absent. See, for example, Charles Caffin who wrote, "John W. Alexander's Pot of Basil is a good example of how a picture may be founded upon a poem, and yet not depend upon it for interest, deriving its charm independently from the beauty of its coloring and the eloquence of its lines and masses," in "Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy," Harper's Weekly 42, no. 2145 (January 29, 1898): 102; Georgia W. Fraser wrote, "The picture, without doubt, was suggested by Keats's 'Isabella and the Pot of Basil,' but independent of title or illustrative character, it stands upon its own merits as a poetic conception pictorially rendered," in "John W. Alexander: His Paintings," Art Education 4 (May 1898): 172; and French critic Armand Dayot who wrote, "In [it] we find what seems to us as the same preoccupation on the part of the painter to make the study of line and a skillful juxtaposition of harmonious colors the chief means of producing his effect, although in [Isabella et le pot de basilic] the strong contrast of light and shade produced by an artificial light is closely studied," in "John W. Alexander," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 99, no. 593 (October 1899): 696.

12. For a discussion of Hunt's Isabella and the Pot of Basil, see The Pre-Raphaelites (London: Tate Gallery, 1984), pp. 216-18.

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13. Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity. Images of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 47.

14. Beardsley's Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist is reproduced in Joseph Pennell, "A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley," The Studio 1 (1893): 19. The drawing is reproduced and discussed in From Realism to Symbolism, pp. 59-60.

15. Alexander may have known Leighton's Lachrymae through reproduction as studies for it appeared in T.T., "The Royal Academy of Arts, 1895), The Art Journal 57 (June 1895): 161. Leighton's work is briefly discussed in From Realism to Symbolism, pp. 94-95. See also Victorian High Renaissance (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1978); and Susan P. Casteras, "The Femme Fatale and other Colossal Beings," in The Substance or the Shadow: Images of Victorian Womanhood (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1982), pp. 42-45.

16. Thadée Natanson, "L'Art Des Salons, II," La Revue Blanche 12, no. 68 (June 1897): 638.

17. "Le terme extrême de cet art un peu bien factice est donné par M. Alexander, adonné maintenant aux recherches des silhouettes en filles." De Fourcaud, "Champ-de-Mars," (April 23, 1897): 1 supplément.

18. André Pératé, "Les Portraits," in La Peinture au Salon de 1897 (Paris: Maison Didot, 1897), pp. 36-37.

19. For example, Alexander exhibited Portrait gris (SNBA 1893) twice in 1897: at the 19th Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists (spring) and at the International Exposition in Copenhagen (May 1 - October 31). He exhibited Repos (SNBA 1895) and Le piano (SNBA 1894) at the Second International Exhibition of Fine Arts, Venice (April - October); Peonies (SNBA 1897) at the 14th Annual Exposition in St. Louis (September 28 - October 30); and Isabella et le pot de basilic (1897 SNBA) at the 2nd Annual Exhibition, Carnegie Institute (November 1897 - January 1, 1898), followed immediately by the 67th Annual Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (winter 1898). At the 20th Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists (March 19 - April 23, 1898), Alexander exhibited three works from the 1897 Salon du Champ-de-Mars; La femme jaune (Yellow Girl), Isabella et le pot de basilic, and Peonies. See respectively "Bulletin des Concours et Expositions de 1897," Le Journal des Arts 19, no. 19 (March 17, 1897): 3; O. T. "The International Exhibition of Art at Copenhagen," The Art Journal 17, no. 9 (September 1897):

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279-80; Venice Exposition Internationale, Deuxième Exposition Internationale des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Venise (Venice: Charles Ferrari, 1897); Ugo Ojetti, "I Ritrattisti Psicologi," in L'Arte Moderna à Venezia. Exposizione Mondiale Del 1897 (Rome: Enrico Voghera, 1897), p. 33; and Stuart McDonald, "Art in St. Louis," Harper's Weekly 41, no. 2131 (October 23, 1897): 1064.

20. The Salon de la Libre Esthétique was held from 1894 to 1914. For a history of the Salon de la Libre Esthétique, see Madeleine Octave Maus, "Fondation de la Libre Esthétique," in Trente Années de Lutte Pour l'Art: Les XX, La Libre Esthétique 1884 - 1914 (Brussels, 1926), pp. 161-72. For a review of their 5th annual exhibition in 1898, see Octave Maus, "Le Salon de la Libre Esthétique," Art et Décoration 3, no. 4 (April 1898): 97-104.

21. For a complete list of member of all three foreign advisory panels, see Carnegie Art Galleries, Second Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Art Galleries, 1897).

22. Justin Lucas, "Le Salon Des Salons 1898. Art et Critique," La Revue Encyclopédique 8, no. 252 (July 2, 1898): 585-604.

23. See Léo Clarette, "Les Deux Salons," L'Événement (May 1, 1898): 2. Clarette wrote a total of 15 articles on the double salon for L'Événement between April 30 and May 27, 1898. The most detailed map appeared in Le Gaulois, accompanying the following review, M. L. de Fourcaud, "Les Deux Salons de 1898," Le Gaulois (April 30, 1898): 1-2 supplément. Maps of both Salons were also published in Le Temps (April 30, 1898), Le Siècle (May 2, 1898), and Le Gaulois du Dimanche (February 5-6, 1898).

24. "La Galerie de Machines au Champ-de-Mars ne semblait pas remplir les conditions désirables. Eh bien, non! C'est immense, aérée, éclairée, mais avec excès. Ce n'est pas une salle, c'est un sahara sous cloche." See respectively Paul Fournier, "Au Salon," La France (May 1, 1898): 1; and Léonce Bénédite, "Le Salon de 1898. I," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 19, no. 491 (May 1898): 353-65. See also Auguste Dalligny, "Les Salons de 1898: Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts," Le Journal des Arts 20, no. 40 (May 28, 1898): 2-3.

25. "ce qui fait de la Société Nationale une société cosmopolite." Raymond Bouyer, "L'Art et la Beauté aux Salons de 1898," L'Artiste 1, no. 2 (April - June 1898): 104.

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26. "The Paris Salon. The New Salon," Magazine of Art 21, no. 10 (August 1898): 535.

27. "Sa [l'école américaine] place dans l'art de notre temps est considérable. . . . Les américains se sont rapidement assimilés nos moyens, qu'ils ont adaptées à leur tournure d'esprit particulière, et ont formé une école indépendante très active, qui s'accoit rapidment." Léonce Bénédite, "Les Salons de 1898. III," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 19, no. 493 (July 1898): 72.

28. "The Paris Salon," (August 1898): 535.

29. Alexander exhibited three paintings entitled Portrait (catalogue numbers 20 - 22, one of which was illustrated on p. 185), Pandore, Nature morte, Le bol bleu, Le noeud vert, and Femme jaune (catalogue numbers 23 - 27 respectively). See Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1898. Catalogue Illustré (Paris: E. Bernard, 1898.)

30. See, for example, Arthur Hoeber who writes, "Take his Pot of Basil. It is a harmony of line, a poem of chiaroscuro, a thing of rare invention. No one had previously conceived a Pandora such as that of Mr. Alexander's, with its mysterious effect of light and shade," in "John W. Alexander," International Studio 34, no. 135 (May 1908): lxxxix.

31. For a discussion of this painting, see Patricia C. Mandel, "John W. Alexander," in Selection VII: American Paintings From the Museum's Collection, c. 1800 - 1930 (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1977), pp. 193-97.

32. John C. Van Dyke, American Painting and Its Tradition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), p. 219.

33. See Mandel, "John W. Alexander," note 25, p. 196. For a contemporary discussion of artists' frames, see Frederick W. Coburn, "Individual Treatment of the Picture Frame," International Studio 30, no. 117 (November 1906): xii-xvi.

34. See Leila Bailey Van Hook, "The Ideal Woman in American Art, 1875-1910," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1988), pp. 199-201.

35. The title The Glass Bowl is a modern assignment by the Graham Gallery. The work was included in the exhibition Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856 - 1915,

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Correspondences (New York: Graham Gallery, 1985), pp. 7,12; the work is catalogue number 12.

36. "The Paris Salon," (August 1898): 536.

37. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "The Paris Salons," The Nation 66, no. 1722 (June 30, 1898): 497.

38. Bouyer, "L'Art et la Beauté," (April-June 1898): 139.

39. The purchase of American works by the Musée du Luxembourg is the subject of a master's thesis by Susan Grant, "American Paintings Acquired by the French Government, 1879 - 1900," George Washington University, 1983. A shorter version of this thesis is forthcoming in Le Marché de l'Art (Paris, 1991) with the title "Whistler's Mother Was Not Alone: French Acquisitions of American Paintings, 1879 - 1900." Annual reports of state purchases for the Musée du Luxembourg were published in various periodicals, usually in June and July, including La Revue Encyclopédique, Le Chronique des arts et de la curiosité, and L'Artiste. For a general history of the Musée du Luxembourg, see Léonce Bénédite, "Mouvements Des Musées: France," La Revue Encyclopédique 5, no. 113 (August 15, 1895): 305-10; and idem, "The Musée Du Luxembourg," The Magazine of Art 23 (July 1900): 433-40.

40. Bénédite, "Musée du Luxembourg," (July 1900): 439.

41. "Le résultat de ce favoritisme . . . c'est que le Musée du Luxembourg est en train de devenir le Musée des Étrangers, à la façon de cette Société dite Nationale." Paul Leroi, "Les Achats d'Oeuvres d'Art Operés par l'État: La Peinture," L'Art 59 (1900): 1092-93. In fact, Leroi was highly critical of the State's purchase of Alexander's Le noeud vert, which he felt was of inferior quality. See ibid., p. 1096.

42. Lockman interview, frames 169-70. Elizabeth Alexander recalled that Mr. Longfellow, a trustee of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, did not have authority to speak for the other trustees, but said that if they did not agree to the purchase of Isabella et le pot de basilic, he would buy it for his personal collection.

43. The complete dossier on the purchase of Alexander's work is housed at the Archives Nationale, Paris, F/21/2119, John White Alexander file. All dates and information are drawn from this source.

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44. Portrait gris is in the collection at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, acquisition number R.F. 1151.

45. For a list of council and honorary members of the Society, see International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, Exhibition of International Art. Illustrated Catalogue (London: William Heinemann, 1898). For information on the organization of the Society, see E. R. and J. Pennell, "The International," in The Life of James McNeill Whistler (London: William Heinemann, 1908), vol. 2, pp. 216-27.

46. See Kenneth McConkey, "Whistler and the Velázquez Aesthetic," in Edwardian Portraits: Images of an Age of Opulence (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987), pp. 22-27.

47. See N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "International Art in London," The Studio 73 (October 31, 1901): 337; and "Chronicle of Art," Magazine of Art 21, no. 10 (August 1898): 574.

48. "Exhibition of International Art," The Illustrated London News 112 (May 28, 1898): 788.

49. See, for example, N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "An International Art Exhibition in London," The Nation 66, no. 1718 (June 2, 1898): 4201; and G. Sauter, "The International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers," The Studio 14, no. 64 (July 1898): 119.

50. See respectively Offizieller Katalog der Internationalen Kunst-Ausstellung des Vereins bildenden Kunstler Munchens "Secession" 1898 (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1898); and William Ritter, "Les Expositions Internationales: Vienne," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 20, no. 494 (August 1898): 165-76. The Cafe is recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 261. It was included in Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1980, pp. 31-32; the work is catalogue number 14.

51. Alexander's work was catalogue number 161 and was illustrated in Carnegie Art Galleries, Third Annual Exhibition Held at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Art Galleries, 1898), p. 6. The exhibition was held November 3, 1898 - January 1, 1899.

52. Charles H. Caffin, "Art in Pittsburgh," Harper's Weekly 42, no. 2186 (November 12, 1898): 1102.

53. Henri Frantz, "The Paris Salons of 1899," Magazine of Art 22, no. 10 (August 1899): 433.

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54. See, for example, B. B. "Studio Talk: Paris," The Studio 16, no. 71 (February 1899): 68; and Charles Saunier, "Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts," La Revue Blanche 19, no. 91 (May 1899): 136.

55. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "This Year's Salons," The Nation 68, no. 1772 (June 15, 1899): 454.

56. See, for example, Raymond Bouyer, "Un Salonnier aux Salons de 1899," L'Artiste 2, no. 6 (April - June 1899): 139. Bouyer's review was nearly 100 pages, itself a daunting figure.

57. "Les portraits sont beaucoup plus, à la Société Nationale, des oeuvres d'art que des souvenirs de famille. La personalité du modèle importe peu ici." Henry Eon, "Les Salons de 1899, Peinture," La Plume 11, no. 342 (May 15, 1899): 346. See also Roger Marx, "Les Salons de 1899," La Revue Encyclopédique 9, no. 306 (July 15, 1899): 555.

58. Bouyer, "Un Salonnier," (April - June 1899): 139.

59. Le rayon du soleil was catalogue number 18 in Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1899 (Évreux: Ch. Hérissey, 1899), p. 22. This work was painted in the summer of 1898 in Val de la Haye, a small city east of Rouen, where the Alexanders spent the summer. In a letter to Allen, Alexander wrote that he brought his model from Paris with him for the summer and said, "I find it is a great help. The usual country models are impossible." Letter dated June 26, 1898, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 795-98. Alexander painted at least two other large canvases during this summer: The Café and Flower, JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frames 261-3. Alexander first exhibited Le rayon du soleil at the 69th annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1899, where it won the Lippincott Prize. This was the first time that Alexander exhibited a new major figure composition in the United States before Paris. For a review of the Philadelphia exhibition, see Charles H. Caffin, "The Pennsylvania Exhibition," Harper's Weekly 43 (January 28, 1899): 92, 102-03.

60. "Le peinture même est, si je puis dire, musicale; le rayon, comme un coup d'archet, fait vibrer les cordes graves des ombres assourdies." Paul Desjardins, "Les Salons de 1899. IV. Peinture," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 22, no. 506 (August 1899): 133.

61. Although Alexander's interest in the effects of sunlight on the figure is shared by many artists associated with American Impressionism, his decorative figure painting

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falls outside of its purview. The bibliography on this subject has grown substantially in the last five years although William H. Gerdts, American Impressionism (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984) remains the standard source. For a study of the international character of Impressionism, see Norma Broude, ed., World Impressionism: The International Movement 1860 - 1920 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), and in particular William H. Gerdts, "Impressionism in the United States," pp. 36-69..

62. "Qui ne connâit pas les notations féminines, d'une charme de présentation et du couleur si étrange, d'un mouvement toujours si inattendu et si juste, de l'américain Alexander? La femme au violoncelle, qu'il expose, est digne des ses envois précédents." Thiébault-Sisson, "Le Salon de 1899. La Peinture," Le Temps (April 30, 1899): 2 supplément.

63. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "This Year's Salons," (June 15, 1899): 455.

64. The Carnegie Institute international exhibition was held November 2, 1899 - January 1, 1900. For a review of the exhibition, see Charles H. Caffin, "Pittsburgh International Exhibition," Harper's Weekly 43 (November 11, 1899): 1149.

65. The author is indebted to Dr. Jennifer A. Martin Bienenstock for drawing her attention to these exhibitions in Ghent and for generously sharing the results of her research on these exhibitions vis-à-vis their parallels with the Salon du Champ-de-Mars.

66. See Ergaste, "Le Salon de Gand,: Le Petit Bleu (August 11, 1899): 2; and idem, "Le Salon de Gand," Le Petit Bleu (August 27, 1899): 3. See also Yvanhoé Rambossen, "Exposition quartriennale de Gand," La Plume 11, no. 253 (November 1, 1899): 690-91.

67. See Ville de Gand, XXXVII Exposition. Salon de 1899 (Gand, 1899). The Ghent exhibitions were organized every four years by the Société Royale for the encouragement of the fine arts. For a discussion of the American paintings in the 1899 exhibition, see Octave Maus, "Le Salon de Gand: Les Peintres Étrangers," L'Art Moderne 19, no. 41 (October 8, 1899): 335.

68. Harrison S. Morris, "The Portraits of John W. Alexander," Scribner's Magazine 25, no. 3 (March 1899): 340-41,344.

69. Ibid., p. 344.

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70. Ibid.

71. Armand Dayot, "John W. Alexander," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 99, no. 593 (October 1899): 695.

72. Ibid., p. 696.

73. Gabriel Mourey, "An American Painter in Paris: John W. Alexander," International Studio 11 (August 1900): 71.

74. Ibid., p. 77.

75. Ibid., p. 72.

76. Ibid., p. 72.

77. Gabriel Mourey, "J. W. Alexander," in Des Hommes devant la nature et la vie (Paris: Société d'éditions littéraires et artistiques, 1902), pp. 173-88.

78. For comparative statistics on universal expositions from 1851 to the present, see Jacques Bouyer, "L'Exposition Universelle de 1900. Les Expositions. Coup d'oeil rétrospectif," La Revue Encyclopédique 10, no. 345 (1900): 281-89.

79. For general information on the exhibition of fine arts at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, see Catalogue Officiel Illustré de l'Exposition Décennale des Beaux-Arts, 1889 à 1900 (Paris: Imprimerie Lemercier, 1900); Arsène Alexandre, "Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition," Le Figaro (April 14, 1900): 4; and idem, "Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900," Le Figaro (May 1, 1900): 3-5.

80. For information on the foreign schools at the Décennale, see Exposition Internationale Universelle de 1900. Catalogue Général Official. Groupe II, Classes 7 à 10 (Paris: Imprimerie Lemercier, 1900), vol. 2. For information of the United States section, see "États-Unis," in ibid., pp. 355-78. See also Fine Arts Exhibit, United States of America, Paris Exposition of 1900. Official Illustrated Catalogue (Boston: Noyes, Platt & Company, 1900).

81. For a tally of the medalists in the Décennale, see "L'Exposition Universelle: Les Récompenses: Groupe II: Oeuvres d'art," L'Art Français 13, no. 649 (August 25, 1900): n. pag.

82. Quoted in H. Hobart Nichols, "Prefatory," in Fine Arts Exhibit, United States of America, p. xv.

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83. Ibid., p. xvi.

84. Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

85. Ibid., p. xvi. Diane Pietrucha Fischer is preparing a doctoral dissertation on the American display at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, "The Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900: The Repatriation of the American Painter," at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

86. "Si l'on parcourt le petit index biographique qui précede le catalogue américain, on constate une fois de plus les rapports étroits de cet art avec le nôtre. La Holland, la Bavière quelquefois, l'Angleterre, mais par-dessus tout la France, tel sont les pays où se sont formés les artistes américains. . . . Aussi avons-nous le droit de considérer avec quelque fierté cette riche et vigoreuse école, dont la nôtre a été la mère et continue a être la nourrice. Mais le phénomène le plus intéressant à noter, c'est le commencement d'emancipation qui se produit . . . cette tentative d'affranchisement." Léonce Bénédite, "Les Arts à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900. L'Exposition Décennale. La Peinture Étrangère, III," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 24, no. 522 (December 1900): 581-82. Bénédite's discussion of the American display is reprinted with the title "La Peinture Étrangère: États-Unis," in Les Beaux-Arts et les Arts Décoratifs à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900 (Paris: Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1901), pp. 401-05.

87. "On disait autrefois que l'Amérique pourrait avoir des artistes, qu'elle n'aurait jamais un art." L. de Fourcaud, "Les Peintres Américains à l'Exposition," Le Gaulois du Dimanche (September 15-16, 1900): 1.

88. "On ne saurait, assurément, prétendre que cet ensemble témoigne d'une école profondément unifiée, en plein épanouissement de qualités originales, mais au moins témoigne-t-il d'une école déjà franchement constituée et qui prend conscience d'elle-même. . . . L'École des États-unis jouera probablement un jour--et peut-être, plus tôt qu'on ne le pense--un rôle glorieux." Ibid., p. 1.

89. "La plupart [des peintres américains] portent encore la marque de leur éducation europeénne . . . surtout française, mais ils la portent avec une liberté croissante. C'est une des sections étrangères où, depuis vingt ans, le progrès a été le plus rapide et décisif, et l'on peut prévoir l'heure prochaine où la peinture américaine tout à fait émancipée et indépendente, deviendra un des facteurs actifs de l'art universel." Georges Lafenestre, "L'Exposition Universelle. La Peinture I, Les Écoles

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Étrangères," La Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne 8, no. 43 (October 1900): 218.

90. Ellis T. Clarke, "Alien Element in American Art," Brush and Pencil 7, no. 1 (October 1900): 36.

91. Ibid., p. 45.

92. Ibid., p. 47.

93. N. N. [pseud. Elizabeth Robins Pennell], "The Paris Exposition - V. The American Section," The Nation 71, no. 1831 (August 2, 1900): 88-90.

94. Alexander served as a member of an international jury for the French section of etchings, engravings, and lithographs. Alexander wrote in a letter to Colonel Allen, "It is something of an honor for a foreigner to vote for French medals." Letter dated June 22, 1900, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 517. Alexander was also a member of the National Jury, convened in Paris, for the American display of paintings, drawings and engravings. Other jurors included Abbey, Dannat, A. Harrison, Melchers, Millet, Sargent, and Stewart. See Fine Arts Exhibit. United States of America, p. ix.

95. Le mère, Portrait de Rodin, and Automne were catalogue numbers 6 through 8 respectively. See Catalogue Officiel Illustré, p.292.

96. Elizabeth Alexander recalled, "We had known Rodin for a long time and used to go over there and see him and the portrait was painted there, because when he was in his studio he always stood just under the north light. He had a way of standing there and talking, always with a little piece of sculpture in his hands, which he was always feeling. It was usually one of the little studies for the big copy of the Paradise and Inferno which he was working on." Lockman interview, frame 188.

97. Auguste Marguillier, "L'Art Étranger: Exposition décennale 1890 - 1900," La Revue Encyclopédique 10, no. 368 (September 1900): 742.

98. Bénédite, "L'Exposition Décennale," p. 582. See also William Walton, Chefs-d'Oeuvres of the Exposition Universelle (Philadelphia: George Barrie and Son, 1900), vol. 3, p. 46.

99. "The Society of Artists," New York Times (March 31, 1902): 2.

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100. N. N. "The Paris Exposition," p. 89.

101. For information on Mary Cassatt, see Nancy Mowell Mathews, "Mary Cassatt and the 'Modern Madonna' of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1980); and Griselda Pollock, Mary Cassatt (New York: Harper and Row, 1980). The standard source on Elizabeth Nourse is Mary Alice Heekin and Lois Marie Fink, Elizabeth Nourse, 1859-1938. A Salon Career (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983).

102. Société Nouvelle de Peintres et de Sculpteurs (Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, 1900), n. pag. The Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts did not hold an exhibition in 1900 as most of its members participated in the Exposition Universelle. See "Le Salon de 1900," L'Art Français 12, no. 622 (February 17, 1900): n. pag., for a statement by the Nationale's president, Carolus-Duran, regarding the decision not to hold an exhibition in 1900.

103. The other American Sociétaires were Walter Gay and Eugene Vail.

104. "En un mot, une sympathie d'art, voilà la raison d'être de notre groupement." Gabriel Mourey, "Société Nouvelle de Peintres et de Sculpteurs," Figaro Illustré (April 1901): 18.

105. "On sait le reproche communément addressé aux expositions d'ensemble; elles manquent de lien d'unité; de raison d'être; elles ne montrent qu'une association hétérogère de talents dissemblables. . . . Cette fois, par une heureuse et exceptionnelle fortune, la lucidité d'un esprit critique a présidé à un groupement de peintres et de sculpteurs. . . . Le mérite de l'initiative appartient à un des meilleurs esthéticiens de ce temps, M. Gabriel Mourey; il faut lui faire grand honneur d'avoir crée un salonnet d'une homogénéite parfaite." "Petits Salons. Société nouvelle de peintres et de sculpteurs," La Revue Encyclopédique 10, no. 356 (1900): 500. See also Thomas Albert, "L'Exposition de la Société Nouvelle," L'Art Décoratif 2, no. 19 (April 1900): 41-42.

106. Marine was included in Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1985, with the title The Sea, pp.9,13. Fleurs was later exhibited with the title Peonies and Flowers, as in the 23rd Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists in 1901. This work is recorded with the title Flower in JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 262. It also was included in Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1985, cover illustration.

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107. Elizabeth Alexander referred to Alexander's trip to Edinburgh in Lockman interview, frame 193. In a letter to Col. Allen dated June 22, 1900, Alexander referred to his plans to paint in Edinburgh for the summer, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frame 516. Alexander's residence at the Cowan's home is recounted in John James Cowan, From 1846 to 1932 (Edinburgh: Pillans and Wilson, 1933), pp. 156-57. Seven portraits painted in Edinburgh, including that of Mr. Cowan, are listed in Carnegie Institute, "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," p. 45. Cowan's purchase of Devant la glace is recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1729, frame 240.

108. Cowan, From 1846 to 1932, p. 156. Cowan applauded Alexander's swiftness in contrast to his portrait by Whistler which remained unfinished after over sixty sittings.

109. Melville E. Wright, "Philadelphia Art Exhibition," Brush and Pencil 7, no. 5 (February 1901): 267. The 70th Annual Exhibition was held January 14 - February 23.

110. Ibid., p. 258.

111. Ibid., p. 275.

112. The exhibition was held March 13 - May 4. Alexander's works were catalogue numbers 167, 247, and 300 respectively. See Society of American Artists, Twenty-Third Annual Exhibition (1901), pp. 38,47,52.

113. "The Society of Artists," (March 31, 1901), p.2.

114. The exact date of Alexander's permanent return to the United States is unclear. Elizabeth Alexander recalled that Alexander stayed in Paris until 1902, Lockman interview, frame 194. However, the catalogue of the Pan-American Exposition, printed sometime before the exhibition opened in May 1901, listed Alexander's address in New York. Moreover, Alexander served on both the national jury of awards and Paris advisory committee for the 1901 Carnegie Institute international exhibition. It is certain that Alexander had returned to the United States by late 1901, although he maintained his studio in Paris for over one year after that time, as he intended to continue travelling back and forth between New York and Paris. Upon his return to New York, the Alexanders resided at 116 East 65th Street. Alexander maintained a studio at 123 East 63rd Street.

115. Buffalo, Pan-American Exposition, Catalogue of the Fine Arts (Buffalo: David Gray, 1901), n. pag. For a study of the art and architecture at the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition, see Joann M. Thompson, "The Art and Architecture

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of the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York, 1901" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1980).

116. Figure quoted in Samuel G. Blythe, "Buffalo and Her Pan-American Exposition," The Cosmopolitan 29, no. 5 (September 1900): 513.

117. Charles H. Caffin, "The Picture Exhibition at the Pan-American Exposition," International Studio 14, no. 54 (August 1901): xiii.

118. Ibid., p. xiii.

119. Ibid., p. xiii.

120. Kenyon Cox, "Some American Figure Painters," The Cosmopolitan 32, no. 6 (April 1902): 585.

121. Charles DeKay, "Paintings at the Pan-American," New York Times Sunday Magazine (July 7, 1901): 13.

122. Elizabeth Alexander quoted in E. V. Lucas, "John White Alexander and Frederick Carl Frieseke," The Ladies' Home Journal 43, no. 7 (July 1926): 126.

123. Alexander's paintings were catalogue numbers 130 - 132 respectively. Thirty three artists were awarded gold medals including Abbey, Beaux, Blum, Brush, Dannat, Dewing, Eakins, Shannon, Sargent, Whistler, and Wiles.

124. Charles H. Caffin, "The Picture Exhibition at the Pan-American Exposition, Continued," International Studio 14, no. 56 (October 1901): xxxi.

125. DeKay, "Paintings at the Pan-American," (July 7, 1901), p. 13. DeKay's description of Alexander as a "former colleague" of the American painters abroad suggests Alexander had returned to the United States by the time of the Pan-American Exposition.

126. Cox, "Some American Figure Painters," (April 1902), pp. 592-93.

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JOHN WHITE ALEXANDER (1856-1915): IN SEARCH OF THE DECORATIVE

by

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CHAPTER 5

1902 - 1915: LATER WORK
ATTENUATION OF DECORATIVE STYLE

Alexander's repatriation to the United States in late 1901 was widely and enthusiastically received in artistic and critical circles. Professional honors, favorable critical reviews, and numerous portrait commissions greeted Alexander, whose international acclaim assured his continued success. In addition to exhibiting widely, including having several one-person exhibitions--the first of these was in 1902 shortly after his return to the United States--Alexander became steadily engaged with the development of American art. His presidency of the National Academy of Design from 1909 until shortly before his death in 1915 marked this involvement on a national scale. Although he continued to practice decorative figure painting, he turned his attention increasingly to portrait and to mural commissions.

Coincident with Alexander's return to the United States was the gradual erosion of the internationalism of American art and the decline of the expatriate movement in general. The articulation of nationalism--that is, a distinct and identifiable American language of art--increasingly dominated American art activities, preoccupied critical discussions in the early twentieth century, and represented

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a fundamental shift in priorities away from the internationalism and cosmopolitanism that had characterized American art in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This resurgence of nationalism and the search for an American iconography was a complicated movement, and agreements on its meaning, direction, and appropriate subject matter were not immediately forthcoming. Alexander's most striking response to these changes in American art had been his decision to repatriate in 1901. Moreover, this nationalist reorientation informed Alexander's activities and art production as well: his subsequent zealous dedication to the cause of American art increasingly overshadowed his own production of paintings; his attempts to accommodate and adapt the vocabulary of his decorative style to a new interest in nationalism characterized his work for the rest of his career.

Although Alexander's bold decorative style of figure painting was overwhelmingly well-received by artists, critics, and the public alike, his work grew steadily more conventional and conservative upon his repatriation. This less innovative stylistic direction was proportional to the overall slackening of his production of non-portrait work. More important, it was the result of his attempts to reconcile the vocabulary of his decorative style--which was inherently formal and non-narrative--with the new demands of nationalism and the search for a so-called "American"

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iconography. The confluence of Alexander's decorative style, articulated in a distinctly international context, with American subject matter characterized Alexander's vast mural cycle at the Carnegie Institute; the decorative ensemble's success and failure were attributable to Alexander's attempts to balance the dual appeals of decorative aesthetics and nationalism.

Alexander's later figure paintings were characterized by a general attenuation of his decorative style. A new interest in the effects of sunlight on the figure indoors dominated most of his work from this period and resulted in the de-emphasis on and diffusion of abstract linear patterning and rigorous pictorial structure. Moreover, his compositions became less cohesive and more formulaic with the introduction of elements that served narrative and referential rather than pictorial purposes. Finally, Alexander's willful manipulation of women's gowns for decorative effect, which distinguished his finest work in the 1890s, gave way to a greater interest in depiction of three-dimensional space and the consequent deflation of the gown's pictorial and decorative value.

Alexander's receipt of professional honors and his assimilation into the mechanisms of exhibiting organizations in the United States were swift upon his return in late 1901. For example, Alexander was promptly elected an

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associate of the National Academy of Design in the winter of 1901-02. Alexander submitted two works to the Academy, a self-portrait (fig. 74) and a portrait of fellow artist Edwin Austin Abbey (fig. 75), although only one portrait was an obligatory donation upon election.[1] Both are bust-length portraits with the figure shown in profile, painted in a sketchy manner with minimal detail and coloration. Alexander gazes in the direction of the viewer while Abbey is self-absorbed and holds a drawing pencil in his hands. The coarse canvas and the thinly applied layers of color are reminiscent of works Alexander painted in Paris while the lack of emphasis on abstract linear design is consonant with Alexander's male portrait style. Alexander's single submission to the Academy's 77th Annual Exhibition as a newly elected associate was The Piano, a painting first exhibited at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars in 1894.[2]

In the spring of 1902, Alexander also served on the advisory board and the committee on selection of the Society of American Artists 24th Annual Exhibition in addition to exhibiting two works.[3] The exhibition received mixed reviews: some said it was its best display in recent years; others found it an example of the moribund state of the Society.[4] Caffin, for example, criticized the Society for displaying too many older works seen elsewhere. Alexander, in fact, was guilty of Caffin's charge as one of his two

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submissions, The Mother, had been exhibited at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris.[5]

In the winter of 1902, in addition to participating in the loan exhibition of paintings held at the Carnegie Institute,[6] Alexander had his first one-person exhibition at the Durand-Ruel Galleries in New York .[7] Significant not only as his first solo exhibition--eighteen paintings, both old and new, were featured--the exhibition marked Alexander's celebrated return to America after nearly a decade of success in Europe. Of the works in the exhibition one critic remarked, "They not only add greatly to the artist's deserved reputation, but will be gratifying to the lovers of and believers in American art, for they reveal Mr. Alexander as a portraitist and figure painter of whom any country might be proud."[8] Praise, bordering on adulation, inspired another critic who wrote:

> It is unfortunate that the term "masterpiece" has fallen lately into disrepute. Misused and mauled by the unauthorized, the word no longer carries authority. . . . Forbidden the use of a word discredited, it is difficult to speak with reticence, coolness, reserve, when carried by storm before the canvases of a great artist--a really great modern artist.[9]

Moreover, the exhibition introduced a series of paintings of women which demonstrated Alexander's sustained interest in decorative arrangement of forms and abstract linear patterns that had characterized his work of the 1890s. This was now combined with a new emphasis on more traditional portraiture, an activity which would increasingly occupy his

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time and artistic energy. The introduction of incident, narrative detail, and a greater definition of three-dimensional space in the figure paintings, with a consequent decline in abstract pictorial patterning, revealed a coarsening of Alexander's decorative style which would grow increasingly formulaic, restrained, and conventional throughout the decade.

At least three portraits of women, painted between late 1901 and 1902, were included in the Durand-Ruel Galleries exhibition: Miss Dorothy Roosevelt, Mrs. Thomas Hastings, and Mrs. John W. Alexander. Miss Roosevelt (fig. 76), daughter of Hilborne L. Roosevelt (1849-1886), is shown in profile, seated in a wing chair which is turned in three-quarter view to emphasize the elegant curve of its back and arm. Miss Roosevelt is pensive and removed. Her lack of vitality is mirrored in her gown, which hangs limply and displays none of Alexander's characteristic flowing movement. The sleeping dog beside her adds to the overall sense of immobility. More typical of Alexander's portrait style upon his return to the United States were Mrs. Ledyard Blair (fig. 77), painted in December 1901, and Mrs. Herman Duryea (fig. 78), painted around 1902. Both figures are seated in the same wing chair as is used in the Roosevelt portrait, yet here the emphasis is on the flowing lines of the ample gowns.[10]

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Mrs. Thomas Hastings (fig. 79) was widely discussed as one of Alexander's most dashing portraits of the Durand-Ruel Galleries exhibition. Helen R. Benedict, the wife of Thomas Hastings (1860-1929), a Parisian-trained New York architect, is shown seated in strict profile. The figure leans forward slightly with her left arm resting against the edge of the straight-backed chair while her right arm is bent and rests at her hip. Her poised animation is enhanced by the sculpted winged victory behind the figure, whose billowing gown and sense of imminent forward movement are mirrored in Mrs. Hastings.[11] Touches of white in the lace at her bodice and in her double strand of pearls compliment the greenish-grey tone of the silk and chiffon gown, while the background of golden yellow is thinly painted, revealing the coarse weave of the canvas. Of this painting one critic remarked, "That of Mrs. Hastings . . . is so brilliant in execution, so fine in tonal quality, and in color scheme of subdued greens and greys, and has such cleverly managed light as to make it almost a tour de force."[12] A related painting, A Woman in Rose, c. 1900-01 (fig. 80), may have been included in the exhibition. The woman's pose in strict profile is very similar to that of Mrs. Hastings; the principal charm of each work lies in the uninterrupted line of the profile. Yet here, as Caffin pointed out, there is an added sense of chastened sensuality as the woman's head arches slightly backward, calling attention to her elongated

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neck and parted lips. With respect to the decorative value of this work Sadakichi Hartmann later said, "'The Woman in Pink' [A Woman in Rose] is in many respects an ideal profile composition. Everything--the line of the face, the neck, the arms and hands, as well as the arrangement of the dress--has been sacrificed to the beauty of line."[13]

The portrait of Mrs. Alexander (fig. 81), one of Alexander's most known and widely exhibited paintings after 1901, features Mrs. Alexander seated on a balustrade out of doors.[14] The naturalistic setting, reminiscent of late eighteenth-century English portraits set in gardens--an allusion noted by critics of the time[15]--was an unusual one in Alexander's oeuvre as were its obvious resonances with grand manner portraiture.[16] At the same time, the setting alluded to Alexander's greater interest in the visual world and in the effects of natural light on the figure. Elizabeth Alexander is shown frontally, although her gaze is distant and does not engage the viewer. Her body twists slightly to enhance the graceful sense of movement and the gently flowing line from the top right to bottom left corner of the canvas. This movement is accentuated by the ample flowing gown which extends beyond the edge of the canvas to the left.

A palette of muted pink and sage green dominates the composition; the colors are applied in thin washes on a coarse grain absorbent canvas. Highlights of pearl white in

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the gown and in the loosely painted sky behind the figure enhance the somber tones while the crisp black trim at the bodice adds a bold linear element to the composition. The lighting from below, a convention Alexander first used in his theatrical portraits in the 1880s, spotlights Elizabeth Alexander's face, the curved brim of her wide hat, and her right hand. The elegant combination of stylish portraiture and decorative treatment of the figure, which distinguished this painting, assured Alexander of numerous portrait commissions.

In addition to portraits of women, there were at least three portraits of men in the exhibition, including Rodin, exhibited at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, Mr. James Alexander, Alexander's father-in-law (fig. 82), and Dr. Patton. The latter works were typical of Alexander's male portrait style of the period in their emphasis on representational rather than decorative values.[17]

Several figure paintings, executed between the winter of 1901 and 1902, were included in the Durand-Ruel Galleries exhibition and revealed Alexander's continued engagement with primarily formal and decorative concerns. In A Rose (fig. 83), for example, a figure is shown in three-quarter view seated, holding a rose on which her gaze is fixed. The linear pattern created by the black piping on her olive green gown is repeated in the slender slats of the back of the chair on which she rests her arm. The painting is

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similar in subject to a work entitled The Rose (fig. 84), c. 1901, which was exhibited at the sixth annual international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in the winter of 1901 and may have been included in the Durand-Ruel Galleries exhibition.[18] In this decorative panel, a woman in a yellow gown, shown in profile, gazes at a rose which she holds. The figure is compressed into the left half of the narrow canvas; light falls behind her in a vertical shaft on the wall. A Study in Green, c. 1901-02[19] (fig. 85), shows a woman pinning a flower to her gown standing next to a table on which rests a vase of roses. A partially cut-off mirror in the left corner reflects a segment of the back of the figure in a reversal of the more typical device of portraying a woman gazing into the mirror. The pictorial and iconographic reference to Whistler's Symphony in White no. 2: The Little White Girl, 1864, in turn influenced by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's Comtesses d'Haussonville (1845, Frick Collection, New York) revealed Alexander's continued engagement with the work of Whistler, which had provided Alexander with both pictorial sources and aesthetic justification for his decorative style.

A Quiet Hour, c. 1901-02 (fig. 86), features a woman seated on the floor beside a sofa on which rests a book she is reading. Subdued light coming from a lace curtained window behind the figure highlights her profile, right arm, and book. The flowing lines and curves of the ample green-

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grey gown are enhanced by the woman's posture; her legs are folded underneath her while the highlight on her bare left shoulder, which twists forward, accentuates the languorous curve of her back. In a related work, A Favorite Corner, c. 1901-02 (fig. 87), a woman reading is seated on a sofa, the edge of which is barely suggested at the right edge of the canvas from which light enters and casts a shadow behind the figure. As in many of the works from this period, a green-grey palette dominates with highlights of white, black, and rose.[20] Although Alexander had used such devices as books, mirrors, bowls, or flowers in earlier paintings, they were primarily decorative elements manipulated to enhance the pattern of flat forms and lines in the composition. The insistently decorative treatment of the figure in Alethea (fig. 39), for example, contrasts with the greater depiction of three-dimensional space in A Quiet Corner, although both works are ostensibly of the same subject. Moreover, these devices take on greater narrative significance proportional to the less emphatically decorative treatment of the figure and the gown. The end result is a more sentimental observation of domestic life that lacks the decorative vitality of earlier works. Throughout the decade, this restraint of Alexander's decorative style grew more pronounced.[21]

During the next three years, Alexander continued to exhibit widely. He had at least two other one-person

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exhibitions and a significant showing at the 16th annual exhibition of American Art at the Chicago Art Institute.[22] However, he produced very few new paintings. Of the new works, one of the most acclaimed and frequently discussed was Memories, painted in the winter of 1903 and first exhibited at the 73rd annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1904, where it was awarded a gold medal of honor.[23] An ambitious two-figure composition, Memories (fig. 88) features two women seated in a landscape. The composition and quasi-allegorical title recall Alexander's Autumn--it is not surprising that Alexander reused a formula with which he had had such success--except here the swirl of the gowns and figures has been restrained and controlled. They are quite literally earthbound. The figure on the right sits on a rocky ledge and holds a book in her hand; her fingers mark the place where she has been reading. She turns her head to glance toward the other figure who is seated on the ground and who leans against her. Their flowing gowns create an interlocking pattern which links the two women physically. Unlike the figure at the right whose posture is active if poised for a moment, the figure on the left is enervated and remote. Her head arches back and her eyes are closed, as if in semi-sleep. Moreover, the latter's gown is fitted tightly at the bodice, across which she holds her right arm, and her hair is carefully pulled into a bun at the base of

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her neck, while the former's posture is limp and languid. The curve of her thigh is revealed below the ample gown which hangs freely over her body and her hair falls loosely over her shoulders.

Memories was one of Alexander's last figure paintings that would maintain the degree of decorative vitality that had distinguished his finest works in the 1890s. Moreover, as with many of his works from the previous decade, Memories suggests pictorial parallels with other artists' work with which he was surely familiar. In fact, Memories has striking similarities with two works by artists which whom Alexander exhibited in Paris and London: La confidence (1898, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris) by Edmond Aman-Jean and The Annunciation (c.1897) by Maurice Greiffenhagen (1862-1931). The former was exhibited at the 1898 Salon du Champ-de-Mars; the latter was included in the first exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers in London in 1898.[24] In all three paintings, there is a mood of eroticism and langour and a quasi-symbolist overtone implied by the evocative titles and the ambiguous relationships between the two figures. Memories shares many pictorial qualities with Alexander's own work from the previous decade as well, including an emphasis on the flowing lines of the gowns and a low key tonal palette. The postures of the figures, moreover, are recycled from earlier works: the figure seated on the ground

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is very similar to Alethea (fig. 39); the pose and the gesture of the figure seated to the right is reminiscent of Pandore (fig. 61). The placement of the figures in a landscape, as he had done in the portrait of Elizabeth Alexander (fig. 81) of one year earlier, implied three-dimensionality and marked a departure from Alexander's earlier preference for rigorously controlled interior settings in which he manipulated the figure within a two-dimensional pictorial structure. The deflation of Alexander's decorative style would grow more pronounced throughout the decade.

The "aggressive originality" and pronounced decorative effect of Memories were acclaimed by one critic who said, "It is not an artificial originality that seeks novelty for novelty's sake. . . . A more essential distinction is his mastery of line, a quality in which, now that Mr. Whistler is gone, Mr. Alexander had no equal among contemporary painters."[25] Caffin also applauded Alexander's figure paintings, such as Memories, as motivated by a "distinctly decorative purpose," yet he found the usually restrained sensuous suggestion over-emphasized in this work. He said, "When, as in Memories, the sentiment is, if I may so describe it, an associated one, suggesting various ideas to various minds, carried further than an artistic motive and made the basis of a subject picture, I doubt if Mr. Alexander is so successful."[26] It is impossible to know

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what response, if any, Alexander had to Caffin's remarks about the erotic implications of Memories. It is worth noting, however, that this was Alexander's last painting to display a mood of eroticism and languor.

Other new works from the period which Alexander exhibited widely were four figure paintings--A Butterfly, A Mother, Aurora Leigh, and Study in Black and Green--and one portrait, Mrs. Wheaton. A Butterfly (fig. 89), painted in 1904, shares many compositional strategies with A Quiet Hour, although here the woman turns to the right and gazes at a butterfly, which has just alighted above the green sofa she leans against.[27] The ample green gown, flecked with red, reveals very little of the body beneath it and extends beyond the edge of the canvas. The woman's posture, with her right arm extended, creates a declining diagonal that is mirrored in the angle of the sofa's edge. In this work, Alexander abandons his characteristic neutral palette for more vivid colors.

During the same year Alexander returned to the theme of mother and child, although in this painting he included the father/husband figure. In The Mother (fig. 90), painted in 1904, Alexander depicts a woman seated with a child sleeping in her arms.[28] Her husband--the relationship is made clear by prominently displayed wedding bands--stands behind her and bends over to kiss her forehead and to gaze at the child. While the three faces are semi-detailed, the rest of

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the painting is very loosely and rapidly sketched in with long, curved brushstrokes, much like ones Alexander had used in his illustrations in the 1880s. Based on the classical pyramidal composition, the ideology of separate spheres is made explicit in this work. The father stands at the top of the pyramid and holds a book in his hand; his association with intellect and activity are clear. At the base of the pyramid are the seated mother and child who form a single unit; their common identity is reinforced by the similar color of their garments. The lack of an overriding decorative motive in the treatment of the figures, as well as the emphasis on narrative implications, are further examples of the less innovative direction of Alexander's decorative style. Although the reasons for this shift are uncertain, it is possible that Alexander felt constrained by his desire to maintain the stature and the degree of excellence which he had attained in Paris. Moreover, his renewed commitment to portraiture upon his return to the United States in 1901 shifted his attention away from decorative figure painting and toward a renewed concern with representation.

Aurora Leigh (fig. 91), painted in the summer of 1904,[29] features a young girl seated in profile on a high-back settee; her head turns and engages the viewer's gaze. The erect and slender figure of the adolescent girl is contrasted with the ample, flowing gown of blue-grey silk.

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Her wide-brimmed white hat, trimmed with roses, contrasts with her dark hair. Horizontal black bands at the sleeve's edge and the sash of the gown add another accent of color, as does the black and white collie, who lies on the hem of the young girl's gown. The wistful look on the girl's face, partially in shadow, may relate to the painting's possible literary source, the ambitious verse-novel Aurora Leigh written by Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) in 1857, which tells the melancholic and melodramatic love story of a young girl and a misguided philanthropist.[30] However, unlike Isabella and the Pot of Basil, Alexander's most well-known literary subject, this work lacks any direct link with the narrative other than its pervasive melancholic mood. Moreover, as the composition of Aurora Leigh relates both to Alexander's wistful portrait of Miss Roosevelt with her dog at her side from 1901 and his 1888 portrait of Mrs. Draper, it is more likely that Alexander was concerned with pictorial structure and compositional arrangement, albeit recycled from older works, rather than with literary allusions.

Study in Black and Green (fig. 92), probably painted in the winter of 1905-06, depicts a young woman seated on a sofa who bends forward to pin a rose to her bodice.[31] The green gown, with black lace trim on the bodice and patterned with black vertical stripes, dominates the composition, which is very similar to A Rose and A Study in Tone, both of

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which were painted in the winter of 1901-02. The work was widely praised when it was first exhibited in 1906. One critic, for example, considered it one of Alexander's most beautiful compositions and said, "The figure is full of grace, the attitude is natural, and the flesh painting, in light and shadow, is extraordinarily fine. The mass of brown hair is treated most admirably. There is a wonderful vitality, also, in this presentation."[32] However, when the work was exhibited at the eleventh annual exhibition at the Carnegie Institute the following year and it was revealed that the model was actress Evelyn Nesbit (1884-1967), the wife of Harry K. Thaw who brutally murdered architect Stanford White (1853-1906) on June 25, 1906, the public was apparently scandalized.[33] Alexander probably knew the actress before using her as a model in this work. Nesbit was widely known and was often portrayed by artists and photographers of the period, including J. Carroll Beckwith (1852-1917), Edouard Steichen (1879-1973) and Gertrude Kasebier (1852-1931).

In the winter of 1904, Alexander painted a portrait of Mrs. Eliza B. Wheaton (fig. 93), one of his most sympathetic and reverential portraits after the turn of the century.[34] Mrs. Wheaton, the founder of Wheaton Seminary and a pioneer in the cause of women's education, is shown seated in three-quarter view. She is pensive and distant; her eyes do not engage the viewer's. Consonant with his portraits of men,

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Alexander concentrates on characterization of the aged woman with little attention given to decorative treatment of the figure. Moreover, he uses a very limited neutral palette, as he had in numerous male portraits, of blacks, greys, and dull dark reds, with highlights of white at the cuff, the collar, and in the translucent lace bonnet she wears. Critical response to this painting was overwhelmingly favorable and, in fact, it was often discussed, as were his portraits of men, as demonstrative of Alexander's ability to depict character with directness, refinement, and dignity. For example, artist-critic Arthur Hoeber (1854-1915) wrote of this portrait:

> It is an unqualified delight to linger over John W. Alexander's portrait of Mrs. Wheaton, in which he has caught the pathos and refinement of gentle old age, the work being such an intimate glimpse of his subject, that one feels almost a delicacy about intruding in the room. The pose of the figure is natural and unaffected, the quiet color scheme is entirely fitting and the artist seems to have been genuinely inspired with his theme, painting with enthusiasm, directness and power.[35]

As Alexander contributed fewer new works to exhibitions, his works were discussed less frequently in critical reviews of exhibitions. However, between 1904 and 1908, four major articles considering the scope and the accomplishments of Alexander's career were published, and his work was discussed in Samuel Isham's History of American Art in 1905. Alexander's search for the decorative, particularly in his paintings from the 1890s, was the common denominator in all five largely retrospective discussions.

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It is not surprising that Caffin and Isham, who had been supportive of American art's internationalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century and who had championed aestheticism as practiced by Alexander and other cosmopolitan artists of his generation, asserted the continued vitality and validity of Alexander's decorative style. The current critical debate on nationalism in American art had little bearing on either writer's discussions, although Caffin would later incorporate aspects of that debate in his critical discourse. Harriet Monroe's article, by contrast, applauded Alexander's unquestionable accomplishments in decorative figure painting but challenged the current relevance of such work in the light of renewed interest in identifiably "American" subject matter. The issue of nationalism in American art was to become a strong note in the writings of Christian Brinton and Arthur Hoeber, although their discussions of Alexander's decorative style betrayed little of this concern.[36]

In 1904, poet and editor Harriet Monroe (1860-1936) discussed the youthful vitality and grace of Alexander's decorative paintings in the 1890s yet, in considering his work since 1901, questioned his ability to be both decorative and insightful. Of the later works she said:

> But these later pictures do not show so fine an advance as we expected and this art has not greatly broadened with the years which have brought the painter to middle life, and so our pleasure in the retention of so much of the grace and dash of youth is alloyed by regret for the

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> lack of sounder qualities, which we are forced to admit will probably always lie too deep for his searching.[37]

Lamenting his sacrifices to a strong instinct for decorative arrangement, she concluded:

> We must take him with his limitations, admit that his effects must be caught on the run, his prizes won by a rush. He makes a gallant hundred-yard dash, but the four-mile run is not for him. His pictures are brilliant sketches, and the first sketch must stand or be destroyed--he cannot work over and elaborate. But admitting all this, admitting the worst that can be said of his faults, still his work is far more precious to us than that of many a comparatively faultless painter.[38]

The greater concern with subject matter rather than with decorative aesthetics that informed the growing debate on nationalism in American art is reflected in Morris's analysis of Alexander's work and in her conclusion that decorative instincts are not enough to make meaningful art. It is possible that Alexander shared this dissolution with the inherent value of decorative aesthetics and that the gradual coarsening of his decorative style was the result of his attempt to infuse his work with something meaningful and relevant to the modern American experience.

In 1905, Charles Caffin wrote an incisive article on Alexander's work, considering separately his portraits, mural decorations, and figure paintings, the latter of which Caffin found most characteristically decorative. Caffin asserted that Alexander's most distinctive works were based on the decorative arrangement of the figure without

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elaboration of pictorial detail or subject matter. Of Alexander's method he said:

> He loves to seize the fugitive gesture or expression which must be taken by surprise. This is easier to secure at the outset of a picture than to retain through any long process of elaboration. He, therefore, reduces the amount of work upon the canvas to a minimum. The pigment is applied thinly so that the canvas is visible through it, and the canvas is coarse-grained, with the result that its unevenness of surface gives animation to the stretches of flat tints.[39]

It was in his decorative figure paintings of women that Caffin found Alexander at his best and most inventive. Of La femme en gris, which Alexander first exhibited at his Salon debut at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1893 with the title Portrait gris, Caffin said, "In a pictorial way it is a charming decoration. . . . Its great merit is that it offers a signal example of the applied principles of line and tone and lighting."[40] However, Alexander's more ambitious quasi-allegorical subjects, such as Memories of 1903, as well as his mural projects, elicited little enthusiasm from Caffin who concluded, "Alexander's forte is the expression of sentiment through form and color, rather than the elaboration of a subject."[41] In fact, Caffin found Alexander's murals at the Library of Congress disappointing and explained their decorative inadequacy by suggesting, "[Although] Alexander has proved himself to be possessed of a very pronounced feeling for and skill in decorative design . . . the only explanation I can find is in the fact that he is hampered and diverted from the

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natural bent of this mind by the necessity of embodying incidents and telling a story."[42] Monroe shared Caffin's disappointment in the lack of decorative quality in Alexander's Library of Congress murals and said:

> Something in Mr. Alexander's style makes one urge him toward decoration, and yet his most conspicuous essay in that direction is a disappointment. Of the leading American painters who contributed to the Congressional Library at Washington, it must be confessed that he least of all achieved the decorative quality. He can present happily a phase, a single effect, but the composition for the covering of a wall space baffles him.[43]

In his discussion of modern portrait painters within the context of the history of American art in 1905, Samuel Isham defined Alexander's work as characteristically decorative, emphasizing in particular his suppression of detail and narrative to enhance the pictorial arrangement of forms, and his fluency with flowing lines and tonal variations.[44] Although acknowledging the importance of Alexander's tenure in Paris during which time he fully articulated his decorative style, Isham attributed Alexander's vast popularity as a portraitist in part to his early Munich training, which emphasized painting over drawing, with a consequent freedom and fluency with the brush.[45]

In 1908, Christian Brinton (1870-1942), a prolific art critic and writer, examined the evolution of Alexander's decorative style and declared the artist "our foremost painter of women, the novelty, the vivacity, and the

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unquestioned beauty of his achievements are their own vindication. Strictly speaking [he] is not a portraitist pure and simple. He is rather the author of a series of feminine improvisations which are unique in the field of modern art."[46] Brinton dated Alexander's first articulation of his distinctly decorative style to 1893 and found his most characteristic and accomplished works thereafter to be dictated by pictorial rather than illustrative motives. Brinton argued that Alexander's mastery of linear rhythms and command of tonal gradations distinguished even his commissioned portraits as essentially aesthetic and decorative rather than representational. Arthur Hoeber, writing in 1908, similarly applauded the enduring vitality of Alexander's decorative motive, in particular in his images of women, and wrote, "No one seems to treat a gown just as he does, no one seems to get quite the posture he evokes from his women, without affectation and without straining."[47] Oddly, neither critic mentioned Alexander's vast mural cycle at the Carnegie Institute, which had recently been unveiled and had been widely noted in the critical press.

The definition and demonstration of nationalism continued to animate exhibitions and to preoccupy critical discussions in the first decade of the twentieth century. Alexander's position within this complicated movement toward

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nationalism in American art is in some ways paradigmatic of the movement as a whole. While there were the intransigent few who clamored for an American art that bore not trace of European influence, most critics, artists, and exhibition organizers recognized that there was no possibility of such a clean break with the past nor was there the need for one. In fact, the resurgence of nationalism in American art during the first decade of the twentieth century was marked by its accommodation of the works and accomplishments of cosmopolitan artists within its purview. The internationalism of American art in the 1890s provided the backdrop on which to cast new light on national traits and distinctions between American art and that of all other nations. Moreover, the newly-won sense of freedom from foreign influence depended in large part upon the accomplishments of the artists of the post-Civil War generation who in their desire to participate in the international art arena significantly raised the level of American art to the point where it could declare "independence." With respect to nationalism, Alexander's repatriation, after what was widely recognized as a brilliant expatriate career in Paris, was championed as proof of American art's triumph over international influences. As one critic remarked, "Now that this nomad period of his [Alexander's] career is over, it is

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significant that it is on this side of the water that he has permanently pitched his tent."[48]

The assimilation of international influences within the discourse of nationalism in American art was to characterize many exhibitions in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the foreword to the catalogue of the American section of the 1904 Universal Exposition in St. Louis, for example, the distinctly nationalist agenda was made clear:

> The exhibition of paintings in the United States section demonstrates again, the fact made plain at the Paris Exposition . . . that we have a distinctive national art, so individual that it can be mistaken for no other. American art, like American literature, is eclectic, but when from the technique of the foreign school the artist comes home for his subjects, his interpretation and his atmosphere, we have the American picture.[49]

American artists, such as Alexander, who had extensive European training and experience yet returned to the United States to continue their careers were particularly acclaimed as they confirmed America as a viable source for artistic sustenance and subject matter. As such, their work was considered a nationalist expression as it depicted American figures and subjects for a presumably American audience.

In 1906, one year after its dedication, the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy held its first annual exhibition of paintings by American artists, an event not unprecedented but one that demonstrated the growing importance of defining and, indeed, vindicating the American school of art.[50] That the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C.,

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initiated its annual exhibitions of contemporary American art the following year attests to the pervasiveness of this trend.[51] As the organizers of the Washington, D. C. exhibition stated, "This exhibition is held in recognition of the just claim of American Art to rank with the best Art in the world, and to promote and encourage its further development."[52] In reviewing this inaugural exhibition, one critic stressed the appropriateness of Washington, D. C. as the center for such exhibitions. He wrote, "The [exhibition] was intended to open to way to a recognition of Washington as a national art center."[53]

The unmistakably "national note in our art" at the 101st annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1906 led another reviewer to proclaim American art's independence from foreign influence:

> It is already the oft-heard opinion of various serious art critics that this exhibition shows less the influence of foreign schools than any other collection of painting and sculpture ever brought together in this country. . . . It is as if after years of stumbling along an uneven road, of inquiring the way from foreign signposts of isolated successes, of many backslidings, the American artist had finally, almost unexpectedly "struck his gait," had acquired the power, which comes from genius, from supreme skill, from self-control, and intuition, of converting himself into a medium for expressing the original art impulse of the country.[54]

Another critic considered recent trends in American art as demonstrated by the Philadelphia 1906 exhibition and commented, "America has a genius for assimilation. Out of the riffraff of many nations she makes loyal citizens; from

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the schools of the old world she builds up an art which is entirely her own."[55] This assimilation of international influences within the discourse of nationalism in American art had direct bearing on the career of Alexander and on many of his cosmopolitan colleagues.

Comparisons between the international display at the Carnegie Institute and the more national one at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts added further impetus to the on-going critical debate about nationalism in American art. Although some critics were dogmatic in their insistence on exclusively American exhibitions, many astutely recognized the vital role of the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions, particularly in their presentation of contemporary American art alongside that of, and therefore equal to, European art. In fact, one critic broadly praised Pittsburgh as an important American art center due to the Carnegie Institute and its director of fine arts, John Beatty, who "has it in his mind to make his gallery an American Luxembourg."[56] Another critic found the Carnegie Institute exhibitions' very internationalism another source for the development of nationalism in American art by providing a broad artistic context within which to consider national distinctions and directions. That Pittsburgh was the one city in America to provide such vital exhibitions led her to conclude, "It is somewhat humiliating for a New Yorker to admit that there is a

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distinct advantage to being a citizen of Pittsburgh."[57] Declaring American art triumphant at the Carnegie Institute's twelfth annual international exhibition in 1908, another critic concluded:

> The value of an international exhibition is thus to us no longer that we might establish how well we succeed with Munich technique, how conscientiously we adhere to French or Dutch subjects, or how steadily we avoid the distinctly creative expression of an American quality; we have gone beyond all this at last, and today we speak of a national art without a mortified sense of provincialism.[58]

Christian Brinton championed American art and its rapid rise to independence from foreign influences in several articles during this period. In considering the "new spirit" in American painting in 1908, for example, Brinton discussed the rapid progress of American art since its triumph at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. He said:

> To any sensitive and observant student of American conditions it must have been for some time apparent that radical changes were taking place regarding the status of native painting, sculpture, and architecture. The triumphs achieved by our men at Paris in 1900 have been supplemented by renewed activity at home and by splendid showings at the Buffalo and St. Louis expositions. Interest in art and in matters artistic have been rapidly spreading, rich endowments have poured in upon our museums and schools, and the standard of merit in various yearly displays has risen. Art in America, which was once practically non-existent, or which was confined to the hands of a few, is to-day the proud possession of the many, and throughout all of its manifestations, there can be felt the throb of a new spirit.[59]

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Brinton cited the lack of tradition in American art as its principal obstacle in the development of a consistent national style. He wrote, "Fundamentally, American art, and particularly American painting, is a transplanted product. . . . It arrived brand new and ready-made from Continental atelier and academy rather than struggling upward through the ages from wayside cottage or hut among the hills."[60] However, he noted a distinct advance in the definition of the national physiognomy of American art in the last decade and cited three events as evidence of this: the Clarke sale in 1899 and the Evans sale in 1900 focused wide public attention on native art and its actual commercial value; the Comparative Exhibition of Native and Foreign Art held in 1904 under the auspices of the Society of Art Collectors established the accomplishments of American artists beyond question. Brinton wrote, "The exhibition was immediately followed by a greatly increased demand for American pictures, and it would be safe to add that, as far as general appreciation goes, no single event has done more toward placing native panting on a sound basis."[61] Confident in the triumph of American art, Brinton concluded, "American aesthetic endeavor has finally evolved features which are both distinctive and characteristic."[62]

Alexander shared Brinton's positive prognosis on the future of American art in light of its rapid growth and development in the last decades of the nineteenth century

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and in the new widespread interest in American works. He wrote:

> To those who look back on the distressingly dead conditions prevailing in this country only twenty years ago, the great awakening wave of interest now sweeping over the United States in regard to art matters seems little short of miraculous. At that period few . . . were interested either in native work or native workers, and a small band of devoted pioneers had not only to do without patrons, but were actually without the necessary means for recruiting their strength by the study of great examples by great masters. To secure artistic sustenance the would-be artists were driven abroad, and no doubt many a talented man who could not command the means for this expensive method of study must have perished slowly at home of mental starvation. Within the short compass of a decade the whole aspect of affairs has changed. We have become genuinely convinced of the great educational value of the fine arts and their relation to the life of our people.[63]

The lack of tradition and support that led American artists to Europe for artistic training, sustenance, and validation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was addressed by other commentators in the on-going critical debate about nationalism in American art. Artists and writers of the post-Civil War generation had a vested interest in assimilating international influences within the genealogy of nationalism in American art. In fact, the accomplishments of the cosmopolitan artists provided a tradition, so to speak, upon which American art could develop as an independent expression. In reviewing the careers of many of the best known artists from this generation--La Farge, Sargent, Whistler, Chase, and Alexander among others--with respect to the lack of

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tradition in American art, critic John C. Van Dyke wrote, "They wrought during a period of great material development . . . making an epoch in art history and leaving a tradition. The pathfinders in any period deserve well of their countrymen. And this trail is worth following, for eventually it many become a national highway."[64] The resurgence of interest in native accomplishments was surely a boon to artists throughout America and in particular to former expatriates such as Alexander.

In the spring of 1905, Alexander received a commission from the Carnegie Institute to do a vast series of murals celebrating the city of Pittsburgh and her rise to a vital cultural center through the toil of labor. In a letter requesting Alexander's presence in Pittsburgh to discuss the commission, William N. Frew (1854-1915), president of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Institute, wrote, "I would like it and it seems fitting that on the walls of our splendid building should appear the work of a Pittsburgher who has so greatly distinguished himself."[65] Alexander's international fame and recognition, based on his decorative style, and his previous experience with mural painting, qualified him for this prestigious commission in the eyes of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Institute. Moreover, Alexander's professional and personal association with John Beatty, Director of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Institute,

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probably played a role in his selection. Finally, Alexander's ties with Pittsburgh appealed to the Institute's Board of Directors, as was made clear in the letter from Frew, and to Andrew Carnegie himself, who sought justification of Pittsburgh as an unrivaled cultural center.[66] Alexander agreed to the commission to decorate three floors of the new east entrance hall of the Carnegie Institute--over 5,000 square feet of wall space--for which he would be paid $175,000.00, an unprecedented amount in the history of American art, as was the monumental scale of the project.

The speed with which the Carnegie Institute transformed the city of Pittsburgh from a major industrial center without even the allusion of cultural refinement to a center for contemporary art on an international scale was made possible largely by its benefactor Andrew Carnegie (1835-1916). As early as 1881, Carnegie offered the city of Pittsburgh $250,000.00 to build a library and a music hall, providing that the city furnish the site for the building and $15,000.00 annually for the library's support. The city initially refused the offer as it lacked the power to raise tax money to maintain such an institution, while some feared Carnegie's offer was motivated only by the desire to enhance his personal fame and power.[67] By 1887, however, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed an act enabling the city of Pittsburgh to accept Carnegie's offer, upon which

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Carnegie quadrupled the amount to $1,000,000.00. In 1892, the cornerstone was laid for the new Renaissance-revival style building, which was to be a combination library, music hall, natural history museum, and gallery of art. The building was completed within three years. By 1900, plans were underway for a substantial expansion to the original structure. The enlarged building was to occupy over four acres of land, half an acre more than the Capitol in Washington, D. C.. Among other additions, the art galleries were to be expanded to over 44,000 square feet and the natural history museum to over 100,000 square feet. Three years after renovations began, the new building was officially dedicated on April 11, 1907, at a final cost of $6,000,000.00.[68]

Alexander's murals were to decorate three floors of the new east entrance wing of the Carnegie Institute, and were to be completed in a record time of one and a half years, so as to be dedicated on Founder's Day, November 1906. Although the general theme of the murals was decided upon by the Board of Trustees, Alexander was free to devise the iconographic and decorative program. Alexander began work on the murals at once in Charles Dana Gibson's vacant studio in the Carnegie Building in New York, as his personal studio was too small to handle the size and number of canvases for the commission. One paper reported, "On account of the important mural decorations he has on hand, Mr. Alexander

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has had to decline all commissions for portraits for two years."[69] Although Alexander did not completely abandon easel painting during this period, such work was seriously curtailed as the weight of the vast project put an enormous strain on his time and energy. Elizabeth Alexander later recalled that Alexander's method of working directly on canvas without any preliminary drawings made it impossible for him to hire assistants. Moreover, he felt his left handed stroke could not be duplicated, even in laying in the flat colored backgrounds.

At the official dedication of the new Carnegie Institute in April 1907, six months later than originally scheduled, Alexander had twenty murals in place--just over 1,300 square feet of canvas--out of a projected seventy.[70] The entire first floor decorations were installed as were the five central panels, entitled "The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh," on the second floor. In October 1908, twenty eight new panels--over 2,500 square feet of canvas--were installed, completing the second floor decorations, twenty one in total, and twelve were placed on the third floor.[71] Twenty one panels, depicting Pittsburgh's beneficent patronage of the arts, were to be installed on the third floor to complete the vast cycle. However, they remained unfinished at the time of his death.[72]

Alexander selected "The Crowning of Labor" as the title of the entire mural series and devised an elaborate

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iconographic scheme that would blend elements of realism and allegory. More important, the confluence of Alexander's decorative style, which had been articulated in a decidedly international context, with modern American subject matter and a new interest in realism characterized the vast mural cycle; the decorative ensemble's success and failure were attributable to Alexander's attempts to balance the dual appeals of decorative aesthetics and nationalism.

The first floor frieze, variously called "Fire" and "Toil,"[73] consists of fifteen panels, each slightly over ten feet wide and four feet high. Individual panels portray groups of men at work--laboring in the steel mills, the railroad and ship yards, in the coal fields, and on building scaffolds--amid the glare of furnace fires and billowing clouds of smoke which unmistakably identify the scene as Pittsburgh. The quasi-documentary nature of these panels was remarkable for this period in American mural painting. At the same time, by imposing certain elements of his decorative style on these panels depicting muscled young men at work, including a low key tonal palette and an emphasis on two-dimensional pictorial design, the specific nature of the labor is not elaborated. It is rather the harnessing of energy through vigorous physical labor that animates each panel (fig. 94). Alexander explained, "I have attempted to represent no special industry, but rather the spirit of force and nobility of labor. An attempt to give this a

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literal interpretation would interfere with the artistic possibilities."[74]

Through careful observation of men at work and the armature of the modern industrial landscape, Alexander imbued the first floor murals with a sense of realism and topical relevance whose quasi-documentary nature was unprecedented in American mural painting. The depiction of labor without perfunctory recourse to traditional allegorical iconography represented Alexander's desire to present modern American subject matter in a realistic manner. Reviewing Alexander's innovative portrayal of the modern industrial scene and the relevance of the murals from the perspective of two and a half decades later, one critic remarked:

> For the first time a mural painter did not turn to a glorified and indefinite past or to imaginative symbols far removed from common experience. Instead, he looked about the city of Pittsburgh--which he knew so well as a boy--so real, so earnest, so unglossed, and on every hand he saw color and pattern rising out of the sweat of human bodies. . . . Art inspired by industrial scenes is not unfamiliar to us today but twenty five years ago it was nothing short of startling.[75]

At the same time, the lack of specific detail allowed Alexander to impose certain principles of his decorative style to the panels and to generalize the individual efforts of the workers in order to carry the broad theme of the dignity and the value of manual labor. The pattern of billowing smoke provided Alexander with a pictorial device that linked each panel in a decorative ensemble while adding

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an element of realism to the scenes of labor. Moreover, it prepared the way for the more ambitious allegory of labor in the panels on the second floor.

"The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh" is the subject and title of the five original panels on the second floor, and is the crowning point of Alexander's ambitious cycle; he considered it the masterpiece of his vast scheme.[76] The quasi-allegorical subject matter and the predominance of women in the panels on the second floor leant themselves gracefully to Alexander's decorative style. Smoke and light billow up from the industrial scenes below, thus linking the allegory of labor, pictorially and thematically, with its physical realities as depicted on the first floor. Rising out of the smoke is the figure of Pittsburgh, a man clad in armor, who is flanked on the left by heralds proclaiming his coming to the world with trumpets and to the right by a winged, bare-breasted maiden who is about to crown him with a laurel wreath (fig. 95). In three panels to the right of the figure of Pittsburgh (figs. 96 and 97), winged maidens, some riding winged horses, representing the arts, music, literature, science, and poetry, rush toward the knight bearing gifts. In his right hand, the knight carries a lance which points to the panels below, thus linking the toil of labor with its highest expression.

Alexander's choice of a man to represent Pittsburgh demonstrates his desire for realism and for the presentation

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of modern life even within the more overtly decorative panels on the second floor. To be sure, the knight is removed, pictorially and ideologically, from the men toiling in the steel mills in the panels on the lower floor. However, by rejecting the traditional allegorical depiction of the city as a woman and by completing the second floor decorations with several additional quasi-documentary panels of men at work and of the industrial landscape, Alexander links the allegory of labor with its physical realities. Alexander's depiction of the city of Pittsburgh as a man did not escape the notice of contemporary critics. Caffin, for example, commended Alexander for "having the courage and the discretion to get away from the traditional device of embodying the city as a woman, recognizing that the labor of Pittsburgh is man's labor." William Walton observed:

> It appeared to be demonstrable that in this case the usual personification in a female form was not the most appropriate, that something more virile, less graceful, might be fitter, and thus appeared in the great wall panels of the second story, the apotheosis of the Steel City as the mail-clad warrior, with sword in hand, to whom the elements, the nations, the influence of Nature herself, bring gifts and tributes--the arts, the graces of life, that come to crown and complete the conquest of matter.[77]

Bailey Van Hook discusses the evidence of gender distinction in Alexander's personification of Pittsburgh as male. She writes:

> Women could symbolize highly respected profession, law or science of the arts, even invention or exploration, but not the dirty lower-class manual labor of Pennsylvania's industries. Alexander's

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> division reiterates the definition of separate spheres central to understanding gender roles in the nineteenth century: to men belong business and industry, to women culture and the home. Woman was the reward and reason for man's labor; the dirty work of civilization in the late nineteenth century made leisure and interest in culture possible.[78]

This assumption of gender roles was noted in the contemporary critical press as well. Charles Caffin explained, for example, "While the application of mental and physical labor to material results is typified by a man, the reward of labor in wealth of resources and in grace . . . is symbolized by beautiful maidens."[79] With respect to Alexander's rare inclusion of male allegories in the Carnegie Institute murals, Van Hook concludes:

> [they] were entirely new inventions that mark the industrialization of our society. [Alexander] realized that feminine graces and attributes were incompatible with the masculine sphere. The city built on the labor of man in iron and steel mills was male because the nature of that labor violated the refined nature of women's role.[80]

In contrast to the dominant dark greens and greys in the first floor murals, subdued blue-green, grey, and rose dominate the second floor panels, with a complex pattern of silver-white created by the figures' wings which extend from one panel to the next. A plume of brilliant blood-red smoke envelops the figure of Pittsburgh, adding the most dramatic touch of color to the entire scheme. The gowns of the winged maidens, whose faces are distinctly modern, are undefined other than in the central panel, where one figure carries a billowing dark green drapery flecked with red.

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It was this panel that Alexander signed.

In October 1908, sixteen new panels were installed to complete the second floor decorations. Four panels were added to complete "The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh": two flanking the original five allegorical panels, and four on either side of the staircase at the opposite end of the hall (fig. 98). In contrast to the winged maidens and, perhaps to further link the allegory with the realistic panels below, Alexander added four more panels of men laboring and six views of the modern industrial landscape of Pittsburgh (figs. 99 and 100). At the same time, Alexander installed twelve panels on the third floor, variously called "The March of Progress" and "Pittsburgh Offering Its Steel to the World". The panels contain nearly 400 figures and represent the rewards of honest labor: that is, confidence, health, progress, and well-being.[81] What was billowing smoke and roaring furnace fire on the first floor, from which winged maidens ascended on the second floor, has been transformed to the clear light of day with white clouds and blue skies. As in each series of panels, the sense of movement is pronounced. In this case, all figures move from left to right. Only one figure--a young man with a book under his arm--pauses to gaze at the viewer; his youthful face and animated posture are full of promise and hope for the future. In fact, a sense of optimism pervades the entire decorative cycle.

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The vast mural cycle at the Carnegie Institute was distinguished by Alexander's ability to accommodate his decorative style to the overall realistic and quasi-documentary treatment of his subject. The unprecedented expression of modern American life, however, was the most remarkable feature of the murals. Although Alexander considered "The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh" panels to be the high point of his achievement, the cycle as a whole was dominated by quasi-documentary panels; of the 48 total panels, only nine were allegorical. The unprecedented realism of the panels of men at work and of the industrial landscape was noted by contemporary critics. One wrote, for example, "The treatment is mainly and intentionally realistic and the rounds of working men and women who fill the panels . . . show the type of the working people in America who throng her busy factories and streets."[82]

The modernity of the mural cycle attest to Alexander's engagement with the on-going critical debate about nationalism in American art and his search for an American iconography. Alexander's adaptation of his decorative style, which was articulated in a decidedly international and cosmopolitan context, to the exigencies of realism and topical relevance reveal a basic shift in Alexander's art. His previous preoccupation with decorative aesthetics and art for art's sake has been replaced by a new concern with relevant subject matter and realism; formal concerns and

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technique have becomes means to an end. At the same time, Alexander's depiction of the modern American industrial landscape revealed both the potential decorative value and the currency of subjects previously excluded from the purview of fine art. With respect to the value of this new subject matter in the development of a national expression in American art, artist/critic Birge Harrison (1854-1929) remarked:

> It is quite possible that in the very changed condition of our civilization, there may lurk wonderful and hitherto unsuspected opportunities for our future artists, and especially our figure painters. There is certainly a strange picturesqueness in some of our modern steel-mills, with their cyclopean forces at work against backgrounds of whirling steam and flowing furnace.[83]

Such an engagement with modern life and the depiction of industrial subject matter was not to become a standard in American mural painting for at least two decades.[84] Alexander's mural cycle did, however, have parallels with the artistic agenda of Robert Henri and his followers whose commitment to life as the subject of art is tersely expressed by Henri: "I am not interested in . . . art as art, I am interested in life."[85]

Alexander's decorations were widely discussed and almost unanimously acclaimed in the critical press, both in their vastness--in scale and in ambition--and in their expression of modern life. Alexander's depiction of labor

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without perfunctory recourse to traditional iconography elicited great enthusiasm from Caffin who wrote:

> Most murals in America have nothing of the American spirit, or . . . of the spirit of modern progress. They are workings-over of old motives, worn threadbare with much imitation, and from our standpoint of today, seem rather like puerile affectations. . . . This charge cannot be brought against Mr. Alexander's decorations. They are unequivocally modern.[86]

In fact, Alexander's murals, in their commingling of allegory and realism, precisely fit Caffin's prescription for a distinctly American school of mural painting that was invigorated by and expressive of the modern spirit. In reviewing the progress of American mural painting in 1906, Caffin criticized most decorative programs as regrettably divorced from the actualities of present day. He said:

> They [mural painters] are living in the present but their gaze is backward. They have the rare privilege to be called upon to commemorate the genius of their country and the ideals of this most modern of nations, and they attempt to do it by recourse to methods and the mental attitude of a bygone era. . . . The bulk of mural painting in our public buildings is out of touch with the modern spirit and quite inadequate to express the ideals of our own particular branch of material, intellectual and spiritual development.[87]

Alexander's iconographic program that combined allegory with realistic depictions of modern labor was commended by other critics who analyzed American mural painting within the context of its expression of modern life. For example, one remarked, "This is a new and original way of interpreting modern life and offers suggestions for future development of our mural art, in the treatment of American

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subjects in a large and imaginative manner."[88] In reviewing the mural cycle after the addition of twenty eight new panels in October 1908, another critic remarked:

> No presentation of the city of Pittsburgh in pure allegory, no matter how graceful, would be sufficient, and the painter has completed his themes by the introduction of other elements, more realistic and documentary. . . . The artist has contrived to invent and carry out a great decorative painting that is as logical as it is beautiful.[89]

Alexander's iconography of the modern industrial landscape was also considered within the broader context of nationalism, in particular, the role of mural painting in the articulation of a distinctly American language of art. As early as 1901, artist-critic Will Low (1853-1932) discussed the vital role of mural painting in the development of national expression in American art, whose essential qualities must be, he argued, "at once pictorial and national." Low challenged contemporary muralists to find their decorative motive in the iconography of modern life--the trolley car, the locomotive, the steel factory--and "make haste to prove that with the newly acquired means of speech they have something to say of vital interest to our public."[90]

Charles M. Shean, the president of the National Society of Mural Painters, was far more virulent in his insistence on the expression of nationalism in mural painting. In reviewing the progress of American mural painting from the 1870s to the turn of the century, Shean regretted both the

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general lack of monumental decoration in public buildings throughout the United States and, when present, its failure to find inspiration in American themes, endeavors, and achievements.[91] Insisting on mural painting's public and, therefore, democratic nature, Shean denied the validity of allegorical contrivances whose subject matter and significance was neither contemporary nor widely accessible. He urged muralists to seek inspiration in the history and tradition of their own land and concluded:

> Native material for illustration and ornamentation is here in abundance. Our painters have adequate skill. . . . They have but to turn their eyes to what is all about them and . . . an American school of wall painters . . . will arise and speedily remove what for the moment is a national reproach and shortcoming.[92]

Alexander's vast mural cycle at the Carnegie Institute was not without its detractors. For example, one critic who insisted on the interdependence of mural painting and its architectural armature found Alexander's decorations sorely inadequate. He said:

> A few thin laths of pilasters stand trembling in a sky of smoke lit up by the lurid glare of far down furnaces, and floating in this some lovely figures pay homage to the armed man of iron, also floating. He [Alexander], of course, makes the scene impossible, but you don't make a painting flat by making it improbable. And piercing the misty deeps are doors to rooms which look as if they had wandered in quite by mistake. Is this an extension of architecture, Mr. Painter?[93]

John C. Van Dyke, who had praised Alexander's decorative motive in easel painting, found his Carnegie Institute murals "too decorative." He continued:

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> It is paradoxical to say that the decoration is too decorative, but that states the case quite rightly. The pattern and the color that set off an easel picture appropriately fail to carry when employed on so vast a scale of wall decoration--fail to carry from sheer attenuation of motive and design. The Pittsburgh decoration has not enough strength behind it to spread over five thousand feet of painted surface.[94]

However, it was not until the late 1920s and later that many critics and historians, whose agendas were clearly different than those of Alexander's contemporaries, took a dim view of the decorations whose commingling of realism, allegory , and decorative aesthetics they considered vapid and inept.[95]

Shortly after receiving the Carnegie Institute mural commission, Alexander was commissioned to do a series of fourteen lunettes celebrating the history of Pennsylvania for the new Pennsylvania State Capitol building in Harrisburg.[96] Noted Pennsylvania native artists were selected for the commission including Edwin Austin Abbey, Violet Oakley (1874-1961), and William Brantley Van Ingen (1858-1955); Mary Cassatt apparently turned down the commission. However, as late as 1913, Alexander had not begun work on the decorations due to the extent and weight of his numerous commitments.[97] Although Alexander did make some preliminary drawings for the decorations to be placed in the north corridor of the building, they were never executed. The corridor remained undecorated until 1973 when Vincent Maragliotti, who had been hired to restore the

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rotunda lunettes by Abbey, painted the lunettes depicting primitive industries and transportation in Pennsylvania.[98]

From 1905 to 1908, when Alexander was most actively engaged with the vast mural commission for the Carnegie Institute, he painted few new works and declined or postponed most portrait commissions. His participation in annual exhibitions was limited almost exclusively to showing older paintings. He did, however, paint a portrait of fellow artist Worthington Whittredge (fig. 101) in the fall of 1907 which was first exhibited at the National Academy of Design's winter exhibition of 1907-08, followed immediately by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 103rd annual exhibition in the winter of 1908.[99] In his hands the aged landscapist, shown in profile, holds a palette and brush which create a descending diagonal axis. The face of the painter, with his wire-rimmed glasses and full white beard, is rather detailed while the rest of the figure is broadly brushed in. Unlike Alexander's portrait of fellow artist Fritz Thaulow, 1894, which was exceptional in its concentration on decorative rather than strictly representational elements, this portrait is less daring and more representational, consonant with Alexander's style of male portraiture particularly after 1901. Other male portraits of the time which typified his treatment of the

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subject include William Bunker (1857-1942), c. 1905 (fig. 102) and Booth Tarkington (1869-1946), 1906-07 (fig. 103).

By 1909, Alexander had resumed his activities in easel and portrait painting although his mural commissions in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg remained unfinished. Two one-person exhibitions of that year offered retrospective displays of many of Alexander's best known works--largely those painted after his return to the United States in late 1901--and introduced new works. In the spring of that year, the National Arts Club in New York held the largest exhibition of Alexander's work ever mounted, displaying 63 paintings plus 30 photographs of works that could not be loaned. Many of these photographs were of Alexander's best known works from the 1890s including Portrait gris, Isabella and the Pot of Basil, The Blue Bowl, and Pandora.[100]

Critical response to the exhibition was overwhelmingly favorable. Most writers acknowledged Alexander's decorative motive in both figure and portrait painting, the latter of which dominated the exhibition. The predominance of portraiture over figure paintings, in fact, characterized Alexander's artistic production during this period when the demands of portrait commissions increasingly occupied his attention. Elizabeth Alexander later recalled, "He had very little time to paint pictures, he was kept busy on portraits all the time."[101] With respect to Alexander's adaptation of his decorative style to the demands of representation one

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critic remarked, "It is apparent that the distinction of Mr. Alexander's composition, its suavities of line, its refinement of color, and its flat modelling, does not exclude a close interrogation of the sitter's personality."[102] Another critic took the opportunity of reviewing Alexander's exhibition to reassert Alexander's importance as an American artist, who profited significantly from the European artistic milieu but, as he said, "returned in his middle years to identify himself with the ideals and interests of America."[103]

J. Nilsen Laurvik (1877-?), art critic and chairman of the National Arts Club, wrote an analysis of Alexander's work in the fall of 1909 in response to his retrospective exhibition. He concluded that Alexander was capable of striking characterization, particularly of men, but was unequalled in purely decorative arrangements of women and their gowns in figure and portrait painting. He said:

> Largely if not mainly a painter of women, Mr. Alexander has done more than any other modern painter to demonstrate that modern dress is not wholly devoid of pictorial possibilities. He has contributed a new and unique quality to portraiture, making it the medium of almost purely decorative arrangements that give a singularly striking aspect to all his sitters.

Laurvik's praise and enthusiasm reached a fevered pitch as he concluded:

> In the field of portraiture he is the most daring pictorialist that the world has ever seen. In the whole history of art one looks in vain for anything approaching his inimitable skill in the arrangement and play of his figures. They are

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> visualized with a few wizard lines which reveal alike the salient and sinuous curves of character as well as of beauty.[104]

A second retrospective exhibition of Alexander's work was held in the winter of 1909-10 at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo under the auspices of the Buffalo Academy of Fine Arts. The exhibition was smaller than the one held in New York--42 paintings were displayed in Buffalo--but was distinguished by being organized by Alexander specifically for the Albright Art Gallery, and for the display of at least four new paintings.[105]

Alexander's interest in the effects of sunlight on the figure indoors and a greater definition of three-dimensional space, first seen the Le rayon du soleil painted in 1899, became more pronounced as the decade proceeded. Variations on the compositional formula of a woman seated or standing against the light of a curtained window dominated most of his figure paintings from the period; two of the four new works at the Buffalo exhibition were examples of this. Many of these works were painted in his summer studio in Onteora in the Catskills in New York, where Alexander might have concentrated on figure painting as a relief from the growing demands of his portrait commissions in New York City. The Alexanders began spending their summers in Onteora in 1904. In 1887, textile designer Candace Wheeler (1827-1923) and her daughter Dora Wheeler (later Dora Wheeler Keith) established an artist community in Onteora. During the next

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two decades, many artists, literary figures, actors, and art patrons visited or built studios in the area including J. Carroll Beckwith and John W. Alexander.[106]

Alexander's increased interest in naturalistic light effects and greater definition of three-dimensional space in his images of solitary women in interiors may have been a response to the tremendous acclaim achieved in the first years of the twentieth century by the Boston painters Edmond Tarbell (1862-1938), Frank Benson (1862-1951), and Joseph DeCamp (1858-1923), all of whom were members of the Ten.[107] During the first decade of the twentieth century, the annual exhibitions of the Ten were widely commended as being among the finest art shows of each season. When Edmond Tarbell's A Girl Crocheting (1904, Canajoharie Library and Art Gallery, Canajoharie, New York) was displayed at the Ten's eighth annual exhibition in 1905, it was regarded as the most celebrated work of the season. As William H. Gerdts points out, by 1906 "the canvas was critically greeted as a modern masterwork . . . a writer for the Boston Herald noted that it had been called 'the finest picture painted in America'."[108] Acknowledged during its time as the pivotal work in the revival of interest in and commitment to the aesthetics of Jan Vermeer (1632-1675) in the United States,[109]Tarbell's A Girl Crocheting established a standard for imagery of a solitary woman in an interior. A meditative woman, usually alone, is depicted in a fairly

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well-defined three-dimensional interior space. Naturalistic light effects generally come from a window within the composition. At the same time, the decorative arrangement of the forms within a structured design and the treatment of the gown called attention to the formal principles in the work. It was precisely this combination of naturalism and decorative aesthetics that was praised by the critics and the public alike; artists adopted the formula of what William H. Gerdts has called the "passive-woman-in-interior-theme" with minor variations.[110] Paintings such as Frank Benson's A Rainy Day (1906, AIC), Thomas Wilmer Dewing's The Mirror (FGA), Joseph DeCamp's The Guitar Player (1908, MFAB), Robert Reid's The Violet Kimono (1910, NMAA), and Childe Hassam's A Breakfast Room (1911, Worcester Museum of Art) conformed with the basic aesthetic parameters established by Tarbell and were common features in exhibitions during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. Alexander was probably familiar with these paintings and the critical appraisal of them; he may have formulated his stylistic course in part in response to them.

Phyllis (fig. 104), painted in the summer of 1909, features a young woman, shown full-length, standing next to a window holding a glass bowl with white peonies. The figure twists, as though to respond to a question, adding a sense of movement to the composition while creating a long

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descending curve from the top to the bottom of the canvas. The woman is dressed in a white floor-length gown and a large brimmed hat; the black bow at the top of her hat and the dark velvet around her neck and waist give subdued color accents to the composition. Light comes in from the window on the left and highlights the curves of the woman's waist, her profile, the glass bowl, and a corner of a narrow mirror which hangs on the dull grey-pink wall behind her. Alexander used variations on the full-length pose repeatedly, while the formal device of the glass bowl was used in at least two earlier pictures: Mrs. Clarence Mackay, 1905 (fig. 105) and The Glass Bowl, 1898. Of the glass bowl one critic remarked, "It is a remarkably fine piece of still-life painting."[111] Summer's Day (fig. 106), also painted in the summer of 1909, is a more ambitious and less cohesive two-figure composition. Two young women are shown full-length before a low horizontal window: the girl to the right stands and holds in her left hand a bowl of flowers; the girl to the left is seated and bends forward to look at a white kitten who lies at the feet of the standing woman. A bowl of nasturtiums rests on the window seat between the two figures. Light streams in through the window and highlights the flowers and folds of the draperies, which are of dull pinks and greens.

Alexander also exhibited two new portraits, a self-portrait and one of the daughter of his life-long friend

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John Beatty. The Tenth Muse (fig. 107), the provocative title of one of Alexander's rare excursions into self-portraiture (the only other known self-portrait dates from 1901-02, fig. 74), was painted in 1909 and depicts the artist at work in his studio. Unlike the very loosely drawn portrait of 1901-02, Alexander depicts himself in far greater detail. With a palette and brush in hand, Alexander stands back as if to consider his canvas of which the viewer sees only a segment from the back. The canvas itself forms a diagonal roughly separating the composition into two parts. Next to the canvas is a wooden mannequin, a studio prop on which to arrange draperies. Alexander's posture is rigid and strictly vertical. The only sinuous line is created by the palette which he holds in his left hand (an adjustment he made, no doubt, for compositional reasons as Alexander was a left-handed painter). The flowing gown and the twisting posture of the mannequin, by contrast, give the figure a sense of animation. That the mannequin is winged and holds a sprig of greenery in her hands make it likely that he used this prop in composing the allegorical panels for the Carnegie Institute mural cycle. According to Elizabeth Alexander, the self-portrait was conceived of as a pendant to his portrait of Mrs. Alexander seated on the balustrade, 1902, and was intended for their son. She later recalled a humorous anecdote about the title of the work: "The man came to take it off to the Exhibition and he

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[Alexander] had never given that canvas any name and he said I had to write down Portrait of the Artist. I said, 'Why don't you call it The Tenth Muse.' So he did. We received 90 letters asking if we did not know there were only nine muses."[112]

The attenuation and diminished vitality of Alexander's decorative style may be seen in many of his paintings from the period which depend on earlier works for their compositional strategies but lack rigorous control of surface patterning. For example, the portrait of Miss Helen Beatty (fig. 108), painted in the spring of 1909, shows the young woman seated in strict profile in an elegant high-backed chair. The figure is pushed to the left side of the composition. Her gown extends beyond the edge of the canvas while the unmodulated space behind her chair forms a narrow horizontal band. Alexander had used this compositional device in A Rose, c. 1901, although here the figure is immobile and disengaged. Light from beyond the canvas and accentuates the linear folds of her chiffon gown and the outline of her profile. The portrait of Mrs J. Broden Harriman (fig. 109), painted around 1908, is a variation on a formula Alexander used repeatedly. A full-length figure stands near a window. Light from outside falls on the figure and highlights the curves of her gown. Although Alexander's enduring commitment to decorative treatment of the figure is confirmed by the subtle rhythm of the linear

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pattern created by the sweeping gown and its plunging neck line as well as by the simplified tonal palette with a few touches of brilliant color, there is an increased emphasis on representation of the sitter and a consequent deflation of decorative concerns. Discussing the progress in American portraiture, critic and author Elizabeth Luther Cary (1867-1936) noted Alexander's greater interest in characterization: "He appears, indeed, to have grown increasingly interested in the personality of his sitters, and his later portraits are richly characterized."[113]

In the spring of 1909, Alexander was unanimously elected president of the National Academy of Design, succeeding Frederick Dielman (1847-1935), who had been the president of the Academy from 1900 to 1909.[114] Alexander's election was widely applauded in art circles in the United States as a ray of hope for the revitalization of the flagging institution into a genuinely national center for American art. For example, fellow artist Leon Dabo (1868-1960) wrote:

> You have it in your power to make the National Academy of Design really national, to remove the stigma that justly or wrongly attached itself to Art societies--and most important of all you, your personality--your great talent should impress the art world of our country that there is no need for a "Secession"--for a rival institution in our midst but that the Academy will admit that there are many expressions of beauty--that "art" is not in the keeping of a few men, no matter how refined their tastes, nor how profound their learning. . . . A new era should begin for this historic

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> society, and under your guidance, I am sure a new era will begin for American Art.[115]

Alexander's assumption of the role of president was preceded by a significant number of responsibilities in the administration and promotion of American art and may be considered the culmination of his commitment to the cause of American art that had inspired his repatriation eight years earlier. Alexander began participating in juries as early as 1896 with the first international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, but it was upon his permanent return to the United States that his commitments to public service in American art began to occupy, and finally preoccupy, his attention and energy. For example, in addition to being on the juries and hanging committees of the Society of American Artists, National Academy of Design, and Carnegie Institute, among others, by 1909 Alexander was a trustee of the New York Public Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. The number of Alexander's commitments and obligations continued to grow at a staggering pace. By 1912 he was an active member of the National Fine Arts Federation, Architectural League, Municipal Art Society, National Association of Portrait Painters, and was the president of the School Art League and the Macdowell Club. By 1914, Alexander was the president of the National Academy Association, vice-president of the National Society of Mural Painters, and National Fine Arts Federation, as well as a

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trustee of the American Academy in Rome.[116] Alexander's zealous commitment to the cause of American art from 1909 until his death in 1915 taxed his resources to their limits. Slackening of the production of work and the attendant coarsening of his decorative style were casualties of his fevered involvement with administrative activities.

Alexander assumed his role as president of the National Academy of Design with a clear and motivating nationalist agenda. Locating and acquiring a site for a new building to adequately house the National Academy of Design and its exhibitions became Alexander's prime objective and rallying call around which he articulated his understanding of nationalism in American art and the role the Academy played in its promotion. In 1910, for example, Alexander wrote an article about the value of the National Academy of Design for the growth of art in America by providing a structure and legitimate forum for its development. He said:

> All great movements progress through civilization by the aid of an institution. It is the means by which ideas are held back from the disintegrating forces of change, and to convince oneself of this it is only necessary to recall the fact that all permanent institutions are first born in some phase of reformation. This is as true of religion as of art, it is equally true of social conditions. The effort of the intelligent to conserve a progressive idea results in the upbuilding of the institution, which for the time being becomes the needed nursery of the idea. . . . It is from the wider point of view that we should regard the existence of the National Academy, and its value to the art of America.[117]

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Alexander acknowledged that in comparison with the negligible conditions of art in America of two decades earlier, when artists were driven abroad for artistic sustenance, "the great awakening wave of interest now sweeping over the United States in regard to art matters seems little short of miraculous."[118] However, he bitterly regretted the lack of proper accommodations for the exhibition of contemporary American art in New York in comparison with cities such as Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh. He asked, "What is the use of all this preparation if its outcome cannot be made public? About 3,500 pictures are annually submitted to the Academy jury, a very small portion of which can be hung."[119] Alexander concluded that as a truly national organization, the Academy had an obligation to erect a building which could properly house what he called the "Salon of America." Several shorter articles appeared that carried Alexander's urgent plea for a new home for the Academy while chronicling his lack of success in fulfilling his objective. His dismay was palpable in the article entitled, "Even Richmond, Indiana Has a Better Exhibition Than New York."[120]

Alexander was not alone is his concern with issues of nationalism and the role the National Academy of Design played in its articulation and promotion. In fact, several critics addressed these issues; exhibition reviews often gave way to inquiries into the Academy's function in the

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development of a distinctly American expression in art. In reviewing the Academy's annual exhibition in the winter of 1908-09, for example, critic Mary Fanton Roberts questioned what the National Academy of Design stood for and what its value was to the American art public. She asked:

> Should it be an opportunity for our nation to inform itself as to its real progress in art, its development in the past, its hope for the future? Should it thus from year to year stand as a record of the best we can achieve? Should we look to it for an opportunity to understand accomplishment and find inspiration? Should our mature men go to it to watch the progress of our national art, and our students to realize the high standards demanded of them? . . . Or must we accept this famous institution merely as the art opinion of the academic few who invariably see originality coupled with anarchy, and who reticently offer the public year after year a program of cold-served repetition?[121]

Recognizing the vast potential of the Academy to encourage and express the vitality of American art, she criticized its present policies of entropy, insularity, and mediocrity, and said one must look to the one-person or small group exhibitions for evidence of the vigor and individuality of American art. She concluded, "The Academy should be the final tribunal of justice for growing American art--an art which is even now throbbing with the most vital, most extraordinary civilization the world has ever seen, and the Academy should be seeking out those men, urging them to newer and stronger efforts."[122]

Although harsher in her criticism of the Academy than Alexander was, Roberts shared with Alexander a desire for

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the Academy to act as a central point for American art activities, hospitable to individual expression and, thus, genuinely representative of the broad range of contemporary American art. At the same time their writing, as well as that of several others, responded to the increasingly varied and ever mounting number of exhibitions--the exhibition of "The Eight" at the Macbeth Gallery in 1908 being the most noteworthy--which signalled the dwindling hegemony of the National Academy of Design as the arbiter of contemporary art in New York only two years after its reunification with the formerly dissident Society of American Artists. In fact, Roberts' article was in part a response to one by Robert Henri, written after the Macbeth Gallery exhibition in 1908. Henri called for the development of national art outside of the confines of the National Academy of Design, which stifled individuality of ideas and freedom of artistic expression.[123] The dispersion of artistic activity and critical attention continued to erode the Academy's prestige and dominance throughout the period, even with exhibitions and organizations not overtly hostile to the National Academy of Design, such as "The Ten," organized in 1898, and the National Association of Portrait Painters, organized in 1912.

In 1912, critic and author James Gibbons Huneker (1860-1921) asked "What is the matter with our National Academy?" and, in comparing its annual exhibitions with those of the

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Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Carnegie Institute, came to the following conclusion: "You can't see the Academy because of the Academicians."[124] Huneker was not arguing for the Academy's unquestioned hospitality to all new eccentricities but denounced its perpetuation of the academic privilege of exhibiting hors concours, a policy which transcended and invalidated the will of even the fairest jury of selection. Granting Alexander's admirable and genuine intentions for the progress of art in America under the auspices of the National Academy of Design, Huneker disagreed with Alexander's claim that it was only a lack of adequate space that prohibited the Academy from playing a vital role in contemporary American art. He said:

> As spokesman President Alexander has asserted, and not without reason, the exhibiting space is the principal evil to be overcome. He points to the Pittsburgh (Carnegie Institute), Washington (Corcoran Gallery), and Philadelphia (Pennsylvania Academy) exhibitions as confirming his argument. We need a building adequate in size for the Academy, he says, and there is no disputing the fact. But give the Academy its building, give it 2,000 pictures to hang instead of 300, and will the result be different than what it is now - dispiriting mediocrity? Mr. Alexander believes it will be; many people believe the opposite.[125]

The on-going debate on nationalism in American art continued outside the context of the National Academy of Design as well. In an article in 1912, for example, Alexander suggested that the ultimate verification of the existence of a distinctly national American art was the

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availability of training in this country that no longer made it necessary for the artist to seek foreign training.[126] In fact, he argued it was the dissolution of foreign influences--the very milieu in which Alexander articulated the decorative style that won him international acclaim--that marked the triumph of American art. This dissolution of internationalism in American art was considered evidence of American art's coming of age by others as well. For example, Giles Edgerton declared in 1908:

> We dare to proclaim a man an artist even if he has never crossed the Atlantic or studied at Julien [sic] nor starved in the Latin Quarter. Our artists have come to study American conditions and scenery and have recklessly proclaimed them picturesque. . . . It is not unnatural that Europe should resent a little the fact that America has ceased, or is beginning to cease, her ardent occupation of copying the works of their great men.[127]

In considering American figure painting in 1910, art critic Leila Mechlin (1874-1949) wrote "The greatest art is, without doubt, that which reflects, or embodies, the characteristic tendencies of the time and nation which gives, or has given, it birth."[128] Another critic found vindication for American art within the international context of the Luxembourg Museum in Paris and its recent purchase of Edward Redfield's (1869-1965) February, a distinctly "American" landscape, in contrast to the Museum's previous preference for essentially cosmopolitan American works by Whistler, Sargent, Gay, Alexander, and others.[129]

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The effects of sunlight on the figure continued to dominate Alexander's portraits and figure paintings. In fact, sunlight was the title of a work painted in the summer of 1909 that became the most known and exhibited work from his later period.[130] Sunlight (fig. 110) shows a young woman standing in full-length; the space around her is sketched in very loosely with long vigorous brushstrokes. Light from beyond the edge of the canvas on the left rakes in creating narrow linear bands on the floor and across the lower half of her full gown. The figure, shown from the back, twists and bends over slightly, as if to gaze at the rays of sunlight. Her body creates a languorous curve that is matched by the folds of her gown.

Sunlight displayed many of the characteristic features of his later work: a new interest in the effects of sunlight on figures with an attendant diffusion and de-emphasis on abstract linear patterning; a greater interest in higher key color versus his earlier low key tonal palette; less daring and cohesive compositional formulae that emphasize representation and three-dimensionality in contrast to the overtly decorative patterning of forms which created an elegant and flat surface design in his earlier works; and an increasingly sentimental depiction of the figure often including elements which served narrative or referential rather than pictorial purposes. Alexander received a medal of first class for Sunlight when it was displayed at the

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15th annual international exhibition in 1911 of the Carnegie Institute. This was to be the last award for painting that Alexander would receive in his lifetime.[131]

In the winter of 1911, Alexander exhibited a new work, At the Window, at the first American display of the Société de Peintres et de Sculpteurs, formerly the Société Nouvelle, of Paris. The Société Nouvelle, organized in 1900, held annual exhibitions from 1900 through 1911, although Alexander did not participate in these after its inaugural. Auguste Rodin had succeeded Gabriel Mourey as president of the Société in 1905, at which time it changed its name from Société Nouvelle to Société de Peintres et de Sculpteurs. The members of the Société included several of Alexander's former colleagues from the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts: Edmond Aman-Jean, Albert Besnard, Emile Blanche, Eugène Carrière, Charles Cottet, and Antonio de la Gandara, among others. Two other Americans, Sargent and Gay, were included in the 1911 itinerant exhibition, which subsequently travelled to the Art Institute of Chicago, St. Louis City Art Museum, and Boston Museum of Fine Arts.[132] Alexander's participation in this exhibition--he was the only American painter of the three included who had repatriated--signalled his final diluted affiliation with international art activities.

At the Window (fig. 111), probably painted in the summer of 1911 in Onteora, features a woman standing next to

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a window out of which she gazes. The woman faces away from the viewer; light from the window highlights the outline of her form and full-length gown as well as scattered areas in the room. Alexander concentrates on the interplay of narrow vertical bands across the composition--the slender figure, the window behind her, the door to her right, a panel in shadow to the far right, and a mirrored panel behind the figure--revealing his continued if less daring interest in pictorial design even in a work with far greater modulation of three-dimensional space.[133] At the same time, there is a subtle suggestion of social commentary and psychological insight into the narrowly circumscribed domestic environment in which women are isolated and intellectually marginalized. The motif of the figure gazing out the window was a common conceit in Romantic painting[134];in Alexander's At the Window the motif has both decorative value and social/psychological import. This conflation of decorative aesthetics and subtle social commentary may also be seen in Childe Hassams's New York Window series from the second decade of the twentieth century and in works by Robert Reid of the same period, such as Girl in a Blue Kimono (1911).

Probably painted that summer, The Ring (fig. 112) is a more sentimental variation on Alexander's theme of women in sunlight in interiors and represents the attenuation of his decorative style in the last years of his career.[135] A woman is seated on a banquette in front of a window;

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sunlight filters through lace curtains highlighting the right side of her face, arm and hand, and a segment of the banquet. In her hand she holds a ring, which is the object of her gaze. The downward turn of her head creates a round form that it repeated in the large hat resting on her lap and is implied, at least, in the focus on the ring. Very little attention is given to the gown, most of which is in shadow or beyond the edge of the canvas. The narrow vertical panels of the casement windows are reflected on the curtains and a pillow at the edge of the banquet; the vertical patterning is repeated in a panel at the right edge of the canvas.

The Ring, first exhibited at the National Academy of Design's winter annual in 1911-12, was discussed by one critic as reminiscent of eighteenth-century English portrait painting because of its "bland color and ingratiating brushwork."[136] John C. Van Dyke cited this work as a late example of Alexander's enduring interest in patterning and noted, "The round hat somehow suggests a repetition of the round head, and the dress lines repeat the curves. Great care is taken with the linear arrangements. . . . The composition is carefully thought out, wrought out, brought out."[137] The work was subsequently exhibited at the 107th annual at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in the spring of 1912 where another critic noted of Alexander's works, "Included in them [are] most of the qualities that

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really good works of art have always had, sentiment, good drawing, tone, and subtle envelope. Works like these will outlive those of irresponsible theorists that have only a temporary vogue."[138] It is worth noting that these positive critical responses were by traditionalist critics who had a vested interest in maintaining the validity of works by Alexander and the cosmopolitan artists of his generation. The critical posture of traditionalists grew increasingly conservative and retrospective throughout the decade and would be overshadowed by the defenders of modernism first presented before the general public at the Armory Show in 1913.[139]

In the winter of 1912, the National Association of Portrait Painters was organized in order to present cohesive, well-installed displays of the varied trends in contemporary portraiture.[140] The original twenty-seven members represented a broad range of approaches to modern portraiture, from the aesthetic and decorative to the realistic, and included internationally known and acclaimed artists such as Alexander, Cecilia Beaux, William Merritt Chase, and Irving Wiles, artists who had exhibited with "The Ten" including Frank W. Benson, artist and illustrator Charles Dana Gibson, DeWitt M. Lockman (1870-1957), artists who had exhibited with "The Eight" including Robert Henri and George Luks (1867-1933), among others. The Association's first exhibition was held at the Reinhardt

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Galleries in New York in the spring of 1912; 31 works were displayed on a single line.[141]

The premiere exhibition of the National Association of Portrait Painters was broadly acclaimed as progressive and distinctive. The installation was noted for giving adequate space to each work, a trend which many hoped would be followed by other exhibitions in New York. Exhibition installations, in fact, were of increasing concern to artists, exhibition organizers, and critics alike. Institutions such as the Carnegie Institute were widely applauded for their innovative installation policies which hung works on one line. Christian Brinton, for example, praised the well-lit and spacious exhibitions of the National Association of Portrait Painters and the Carnegie Institute, and compared them to "the grotesque and well-nigh prehistoric manner in which pictures are yearly offered to the public in both New York and Philadelphia."[142] Another critic wrote:

> One of the distinctive aims and principles of the new society would appear to be the endeavor to express in modern portraiture more natural pictorial interest and to eliminate as much as possible the tiresomely conventional and perfunctory portrait which is a marked feature of our current exhibitions. . . . The initial showing of the new society, with dignity and considerable unostentation, sounded a surprisingly true, bright note of interest at the height of a remarkably brilliant art season.[143]

Alexander displayed one painting at the Association's premiere exhibition, Portrait (fig. 113) c. 1912, which was

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another variation on the figure seated before a curtained window. Unlike many of these works, however, the woman gazes directly at the viewer, drawing attention to her facial features. The painting's installation in the center of the largest room of the gallery lent the portrait special significance by the exhibition's organizers.[144] Critical response to the work was largely favorable. For example, one critic noted, "The picture has not been exhibited before, and although it is in a vein now familiar to us, it emphasizes anew Mr. Alexander's singular purity of feeling and treatment, and his creation of a type quite different from any other known in modern art."[145] Another said, "The Portrait by John W. Alexander was a portrait in his best vein--reserved, dignified and like all of Alexander's work, ineffably gracious."[146]

The same year Alexander exhibited a portrait of actress Maude Adams (1872-1953) at the 16th annual international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute.[147] The portrait may have been painted in 1911, during which time the Alexanders travelled to Europe with Adams. Alexander had met Maude Adams as early as 1905 in Onteora, New York, where the Alexanders had their summer residence. Shortly after their meeting, Alexander began collaborating on set and costume designs with the actress and Elizabeth Alexander. In fact, he continued to work intermittently in this area for the rest of his life.[148] The portrait (fig. 114) depicts Maude

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Adams in her role as Maggie in Matthew Barrie's (1860-1937) What Every Woman Knows, a role she premiered in New York in 1908 and played again in 1910. Adams was perhaps best known for her role as Peter Pan in the work of the same name by Barrie, which she premiered in New York in 1905, shortly after meeting the Alexanders in Onteora, where Adams occasionally spent her summers. In fact, Alexander painted a portrait of Adams as Peter Pan (1905-06, Salt Lake Art Center) and again the following year in her role as L'Aiglon (1906-07, Salt Lake Art Center.)[149] Alexander's portrait of Miss Adams received no notice in the press, although the exhibition in general was well received. For example, Christian Brinton, whose sustained enthusiasm for the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions informed his annual reviews, wrote, "Ever since their inception, their displays held in this stirring trans-Alleghenian city have maintained a standard equalled by no organization in this country and by but few abroad."[150] The deflation of the vitality and critical relevance of Alexander's work within the international context of the Carnegie Institute's annual exhibitions was yet another casualty of the attenuation of his decorative style in the last years of his career.

In the summer of 1912, Alexander continued his investigations into the effects of sunlight on figures indoors, painting at least two works, The Gossip and A Meadow Flower. First exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of

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Art's fourth biennial exhibition of paintings by contemporary American artists in the winter of 1912, The Gossip (fig. 115) depicts a young woman seated on a banquette in front of a curtained window.[151] She holds a teacup in her hand and has a plate of biscuits on her lap; her parasol lies on the banquette behind her. The woman's face is active and engaged and she looks up at the viewer as if in the midst of conversation. Light coming in from the window highlights her large hat, which is decorated with a flamboyant bow and floral arrangement, and the left edge of her gown. Unlike many of Alexander's compositions of this theme, this one depicts elements of the outdoor space as well. The composition lacks any rigorous pictorial cohesion while its motive is largely sentimental and narrative.

A more successful work is A Meadow Flower (fig. 116), which depicts a woman seated beside a curtained window. Her arms are extended to a bowl of azalea branches on the table before her, while her hands rest on either side of the bowl.[152] The figure is turned in profile as is the seat on which her large hat rests. The flat oval created by the hat is repeated in the shape of the table and pattern of the branches of blossoms. The light coming in from the window highlights the figure's profile and the edges of the flowers. Although it is a vertical composition, the horizontal patterning, the position of the figure, and the pictorial elements recall Azalea, 1885, one of Alexander's

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earliest experiments in aesthetic portraiture. A Meadow Flower was one of Alexander's last coherent, if less insistently, decorative works. Critic and writer J. Walter McSpadden (1874-1960), who dubbed Alexander "the painter of the flowing line," selected this work as among Alexander's finest late paintings for it maintained its decorative integrity.[153]

It was probably in the summer of 1913 in Onteora that Alexander painted two of his last works on the effect of sunlight on the figure indoors. June (fig. 117), first exhibited at the National Academy of Design's 89th annual in 1914,[154]depicts a young woman standing before a curtained window. In her hands she hold a slender clear vase with one long-stemmed flower; on the table to her right is a larger vase with several flowers. The light from the window highlights the irregular edges of the flowers and the side of the woman's face, who turns to gaze at the viewer. A more ambitious and less cohesive work, Her Birthday (fig. 118), was first exhibited at the 18th annual international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in the spring of 1914.[155] Three girls are shown in various positions around a large table arranging flowers and a curtained window in the left corner illuminates the scene. The figure to the far right stands with a vase of flowers in her hands and gazes down to the larger arrangement on the table. To the left a woman is seated at the table; the figure twists and

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is elongated, revealing her slender figure beneath the gown. A third woman sits on the floor between them; on her lap are several long-stemmed flowers which she arranges. At the window's ledge is another vase of flowers whose irregular outlines are highlighted by the light from outdoors. Although the composition as a whole was not favorably discussed, the passages of flowers--a subject Alexander occasionally essayed independent of his figure painting--were admired for their beauty and delicacy.[156] The exhibition in general, however, was commended for its vital importance in presenting contemporary American art. Director John Beatty's efforts in the promotion of art in America within an international context were acknowledged as exemplary. For example, one critic wrote that the Carnegie Institute international exhibitions were:

> America's only Salon; the supreme tribunal of art in the Western Hemisphere. Pittsburgh has no rival city; New York sinks into insignificance beside it; it is the one and only location in America were once a year are congregated in an harmonious ensemble the best examples obtainable of national and foreign art. No previous show has succeeded in presenting so many exceptionally good canvases and director John W. Beatty deserves the fullest recognition for his untiring zeal and discretion in presenting a display of work so convincingly representative of the best painting that is being done at home and abroad.[157]

Moreover, the exhibition, in retrospect, was of significance as it was the last one held until 1920. Exhibitions were suspended during the war.

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Although Alexander's production of exhibition pictures slackened dramatically during the last years of his life proportional to his greater involvement with portrait commissions and administrative responsibilities, his work continued to inspire articles which considered the evolution of his decorative style. For example, Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944), wrote two articles about Alexander's work in 1910. Labelling Alexander "the spiritualizer of modern dress, the poet of large and sweeping curves," Hartmann described Alexander's method and decorative motive:

> A color scheme, a handsome woman in a handsome gown, an unusual pose, and then a feverish quest for graceful lines, expressed in numerous tentative sweeps and swirls with large brushes all over the canvas, inventing en passant some new linear arrangement of drapery. This is how John W. Alexander paints women.[158]

In an ambitious series of articles on modern portraiture, Hartmann discussed Alexander's originality and,in particular, his elegant linear arrangements and manipulation of women's gowns to enhance the decorative effect of his paintings.[159] Hartmann distinguished between portraits and figure paintings in Alexander's work: the former were informed by Alexander's decorative motives but restricted by the demands of representation; the latter were dominated by abstract linear arrangement with the gown furnishing the principal note of interest. To clarify this distinction, Hartmann compared the portrait of Mrs. Clarence Mackay, 1905 with In the Orchard, exhibited at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars

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in 1895 with the title Panneau. Although both works were based on the same compositional premise, he found the latter more harmonious, graceful, and decorative. Hartmann explained, "The principal reason, I believe, is that this picture [In the Orchard] is treated as a decorative panel and not as a portrait. The painter could take greater liberties."[160] Hartmann concluded somewhat ironically that it was due to his facile decorative style that Alexander was so sought after as a portraitist, but it was in his works not limited by the demands of representation or narrative that he excelled:

> Alexander possesses to a pre-eminent degree the gift of utilizing the human shape in such a way as to produce an interesting silhouette against the background. . . . Alexander has a frank appreciation of external character, and he uses his sitters as objective facts, he sees them as curious and unusual shapes and emphasizes every beauty of form that will help him toward some new and charming linear interpretation.[161]

Hartmann's retrospective analysis of Alexander's decorative style emphasized the distinction between his portraits and figure paintings and, perhaps inadvertently, alluded to the current dissolution of that style.

Charles Caffin, who had often discussed Alexander's work since his return to the United States in late 1901, agreed with Hartmann that Alexander's fundamental artistic instinct was to be decorative. In an article published in 1911 as part of a series on contemporary American painters,[162] Caffin identified Portrait gris, 1893 as

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Alexander's first clear expression of his decorative style. The depiction of the figure was dominated by elegant linear patterning, elimination of details, limitation of the variety of hues, and reliance upon the contrast of tonal variations and abstract pattern of ample masses to provide the pictorial structure. Both writers found Alexander's decorative instinct constrained and limited by the demands of representation in portraiture while the figure paintings were distinguished by their decorative fluency. With respect to Alexander's figure paintings, Caffin wrote:

> But when he can choose his model and dress and place her in accordance with the composition of line, form, and color that he has imagined, then his gift of inventiveness is displayed in all its originality and spontaneousness. He gives to these subjects titles, but the latter are an after-thought. The real subject is a pictorial harmony, based on the human form. It is also, within the limits of his opportunity, that I imagine Alexander composes his portraits. He receives a psychological impression, which his personality translates into terms of decorative composition.[163]

Together, the articles's retrospective examination of Alexander's decorative style summed up both what had distinguished his earlier work and what was lacking in his present work. Moreover, Hartmann's and Caffin's approbation of Alexander's decorative and aesthetic concerns reflect their critical agendas and essentially cosmopolitan viewpoints. Later observers were less sympathetic to artists whose work bore the imprint of their cosmopolitan training and attitude.

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A divergent critical agenda informed the discussion of Alexander's decorative style by critic Elbert Baldwin (1857-1927) who, unlike Caffin and Hartmann, found Alexander's portraiture distinctive in its combination of "mere technique and a likeness."[164] In fact, Baldwin considered Alexander to be one of the few modern American painters who successfully practiced what he called "comprehensive portraiture." Alexander's fluency with a supple, flowing line, arrangement of figures for decorative effect, and tonal variation, in addition to his ability to capture a likeness, assured the most distinctive results. Baldwin cited Alexander's portraits of Rodin, 1899, Worthington Whittredge, 1907, and Mrs. Wheaton, 1904, as stunning examples of this type of portraiture that combined, as he said, "the good and the true and the beautiful."[165] It is not coincidental that Baldwin found examples for his argument in works painted mainly after Alexander's repatriation, where the accommodation of his decorative style with a new interest in realism was dominant. On the other hand, Caffin and Hartmann looked back to works from the 1890s, when Alexander's decorative style was intact, to support their arguments.

Alexander's untiring efforts for the promotion of American art within the institutional matrix of the National Academy of Design finally drained his resources of energy

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and enthusiasm. Disappointment at the failure of the Academy to secure the site for a new building to house proper exhibition galleries led Alexander to resign his position as president on March 20, 1915. His resignation was widely regretted. A letter from fellow academician Henry B. Snell (1858-1943), who had been a close associate of Alexander's since 1900 when he served as Assistant Director of the United States Commission of Fine Arts of the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, expressed sentiments shared by many:

> Perhaps no one at the Academy knows more than myself how much we owe for your untiring energy and efforts in the interest of the organization. I know you have lifted the Institution from a dead level to a real live one and the Academy is at this moment more in the public mind and in better standing than ever before. . . . It will always be my regret if you leave the chair before the consummation of our hopes, for the ball which you have set rolling is surely on the run, and sooner or later will bear fruit. You will, however, step down with a jolly good clear conscience and I know I voice the opinion of most of the Academicians that you are about the best ever.[166]

In a letter to Mrs. Allan on May 22, poignant in retrospect due to its date, Alexander expressed relief at resigning his position as president of the Academy and hoped to return to painting in the summer:

> I find it makes a great difference giving up offices. My resigning from the Presidency of the Academy is a very great relief. I am in good spirits. Don't worry and in the least be satisfied that I have been a very lucky person in every way--am quite contented--and am hoping to be able to do a little work this summer.[167]

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Within one week, Alexander died suddenly in his home on May 31, 1915.

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ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 5

1. Alexander was listed as an associate of the National Academy of Design in, National Academy of Design, Catalogue of the 77th Annual Exhibition (New York: National Academy of Design, 1902), p. 9. The exhibition was held January 3 - February 1 of that year. The New York Sun reported Alexander's portrait of Abbey going to the permanent collection of the Academy on March 25, 1902; clipping from JWA/AAA, reel 1730, frame 507. Both portraits are briefly discussed in National Academy of Design, Artists by Themselves (New York: National Academy of Design, 1983), p. 115.

2. See National Academy of Design, Illustrated Catalogue, (1902), pp. 56-7. The Piano is illustrated on p. 57.

3. Society of American Artists, Catalogue of the 24th Annual Exhibition (New York: Society of American Artists, 1902), pp. 7-8, 20. Alexander served on the Advisory Board and the Committee on Selection of the Society of American Artists from 1902 to 1906, at which time the SAA merged with the NAD.

4. See respectively "The Year's Best Show in Art," New York Times (March 29, 1902): 9; and Charles H. Caffin, "Twenty-Fourth Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists," International Studio 16, no. 63 (May 1902): lxxi.

5. Alexander exhibited two paintings at the Society's 24th annual exhibition, The Mother and The Black Cat, catalogue numbers 55 and 235 respectively.

6. In the winter of 1902, the Carnegie Institute held a retrospective loan exhibition of paintings, mainly of works from Pittsburgh collectors, instead of their usual annual international exhibition of contemporary art. Alexander submitted one work to the exhibition, Portrait of Mr. Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Paintings at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1902). For a discussion of the exhibition, see Charles H. Caffin, "Pittsburgh Annual Exhibition of Pictures," International Studio 18, no. 70 (December 1902): cvi.

7. The exhibition was held November 24 - December 6, 1902, at the Durand-Ruel Galleries, 389 Fifth Avenue. See JWA/AAA, reel 1730, frame 15.

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8. "Portraits by John W. Alexander," New York Herald (November 28, 1902), JWA/AAA, reel 1730, frames 15-20.

9. "The Pictures of John W. Alexander," Harper's Weekly 46, no. 2400 (December 20, 1902): 1970.

10. It is not clear if either one of these two portraits was included in the 1902 Durand-Ruel Galleries exhibition.

11. The winged victory statuette was a prop in Alexander's studio, as revealed in contemporary photographs. Alexander used the sculpture again in one of the allegorical panels of his mural cycle at the Carnegie Institute, 1905-08.

12. "Portraits by Alexander," (November 28, 1902).

13. This work was also called Portrait in Rose and A Woman in Pink. See Caffin, "Painter of Idealized Women," p. 5641. See also Sadakichi Hartmann, Composition in Portraiture 1909; rpt. Arno Press, Inc., 1973, p. 37.

14. This painting is discussed in Ilene Susan Fort and Michael Quick, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection, 1991), pp. 220-22. The portrait of Elizabeth Alexander is reproduced in color on the cover and on p. 52.

15. See, for example, "Portraits by Alexander," (November 28, 1902), where the portrait's resonance with work by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1780) was noted.

16. For a discussion of American portraiture at the turn of the twentieth century within the grand manner tradition, see Michael Quick, "Achieving the Nation's Imperial Destiny, 1870 - 1920," in Michael Quick et al., American Portraiture in the Grand Manner: 1720 - 1920 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1981), pp. 61-78. Alexander's portrait of Mrs. Alexander is reproduced and discussed on pp. 186-87.

17. The portrait of Francis Landey Patton (1843-1932), the president of Princeton College from 1888-1902, was commissioned by the college for their collection. See Donald Drew Egbert, Princeton Portraits (Princeton: Princeton University, 1947), pp. 70-72. The straightforward, if uninspired style, characterized the many portraits Alexander painted of men after 1901. A portrait of Patton's predecessor, Dr. McCosh, was painted by Alexander in 1886.

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18. The Rose was catalogue number 7 and was one of two paintings--the other was Portrait of Rodin--Alexander exhibited at the Carnegie Institute in 1901. The Rose was illustrated in, Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Sixth Annual International Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1901), n. pag. For a discussion of this work and of the 6th annual international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, see Charles H. Caffin, "Sixth-Annual International at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," International Studio 15, no. 58 (December 1901): xlvii. Tracing the exhibition history of many of Alexander's paintings from this period is complicated by the fact that they were often exhibited and/or discussed with varying titles. Moreover, many of the titles are similar, as in A Rose and The Rose.

19. A Study in Green was later exhibited and reproduced with the title A Flower. See, for example, W. Stanton Howard, "A Painting by J. W. Alexander," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 113, no. 674 (July 1906): 182-83.

20. In the Alexander file on A Quiet Hour at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, a letter dated May 10, 1950 identifies the sitter of this work, and well as A Favorite Corner, as Anne Raynan Ward, a family friend of the Alexanders.

21. In addition to the new works featured at the Durand-Ruel Galleries, Alexander exhibited at least three of his most known and admired older works: Autumn, which won a gold medal at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle; A Ray of Sunlight, first exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts followed quickly by the 1899 Salon du Champ-de-Mars; and Portrait of a Child, first exhibited at the 1898 Salon du Champ-de-Mars.

22. Alexander's one-person exhibition at the Durand-Ruel Galleries in the winter of 1902 was followed by a very similar exhibition at St. Botolph's Club in Boston, March 13 - April 18, 1903. See JWA/AAA, reel 1731, frame 600. Alexander's largest one-person exhibition to date was held at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, April 11 - March 6, 1905, and featured 26 paintings, most of which had been exhibited previously. See Pratt Institute, Twenty-Six Oil Paintings by John W. Alexander (Brooklyn: Pratt Institute, 1905). Alexander displayed 17 paintings, mostly known works, at the 16th Annual Exhibition of American Art at the Chicago Art Institute in January 1904.

23. "Philadelphia Art Show," New York Times (January 24, 1904): 5. See also JWA/AAA, reel 1730, frame 43. For a general discussion of the exhibition, see Charles H. Caffin,

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"Pennsylvania Academy Exhibit," International Studio 22, no. 85 (March 1904): ccxxv-ccxxix.

24. For a discussion of La confidence, see "Les Salons de 1898," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 20, no. 493 (July 1898): 65. The Annunciation is reproduced in The Studio 15, no. 69 (December 1898): 209. For a discussion of Greiffenhagen's work, see J. Stanley Little, "Maurice Greiffenhagen and His Work," The Studio 9, no. 46 (January 1897): 235-43.

25. "John White Alexander. An American Portraitist of Distinction," Appleton's Booklover's Magazine 3 (April 1904): 474.

26. Charles H. Caffin, "John W. Alexander. The Painter of Idealized Sentiment Through Portraits of Women in Poses," World's Work 9 (January 1905): 5691.

27. A Butterfly was first exhibited at the ninth annual international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, November 3, 1904 - January 1, 1905, catalogue number 7. See Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Ninth Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1904), n. pag.

28. The Mother, also exhibited as Mother and Child and A Mother, was probably first exhibited at the 1904 Universal Exposition in St. Louis, catalogue number 20. See Official Catalogue of Exhibitors, Dept. B - Art (St. Louis: Universal Exposition of St. Louis, 1904), p. 23. It was also exhibited at the ninth annual international at the Carnegie Institute in 1904, catalogue number 6.

29. Aurora Leigh, also exhibited as Other Days and Portrait of Miss B, was first exhibited at the Carnegie Institute's ninth annual exhibition in the winter of 1904-05, catalogue number 8. The variant title, Portrait of Miss B, relates to the name of the model, Ann Bradley.

30. See Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh (Leipzig: Bernhard Tanchnitz, 1872).

31. Study in Black and Green was first exhibited at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, May 31 - September 2, 1906, catalogue number 4. See Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, First Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists (Buffalo: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1906), pp. 7-9. The work is illustrated on page 9. This work is discussed in Burke, "John White Alexander," pp. 211-12.

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32. "First Exhibition of Selected American Paintings at the Albright Gallery," Academy Notes 2, no. 1 (June 1906): 2.

33. See, for example, Pittsburgh Sunday (June 15, 1907); and New York World (June 19, 1907), as recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1730, frame 200. Study in Black and Green was catalogue number 10 in the eleventh annual exhibition at the Carnegie Institute. See Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Eleventh Annual Exhibition Held at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1907), n. pag. The exhibition was held April 11 - June 13, 1907.

34. Mrs. Wheaton was first exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 74th annual exhibition, held in the winter of 1905.

35. Arthur Hoeber, "The Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh," International Studio 31, no. 124 (June 1907): cxi-cxii.

36. See, for example, Christian Brinton, "The New Spirit in American Painting," The Bookman 27 (June 1908): 351-61; and Arthur Hoeber, "A Plea for the American Artist," North American Review 189, no. 639 (February 1909): 213-22. For a discussion of the historiography of American art that touches briefly on this complex period, see Elizabeth Johns, "Scholarship in American Art: Its History and Recent Developments," American Studies International 22, no. 2 (October 1984), especially pp. 7-10.

37. Harriet Monroe, "John W. Alexander, His Paintings," The House Beautiful 15, no. 2 (January 1904): 73.

38. Ibid., p. 68.

39. Caffin, "Painter of Idealized Women," pp. 5684,5686.

40. Ibid., p. 5686.

41. Ibid., p. 5691.

42. Ibid., p. 5692.

43. Monroe, "John W. Alexander," (January 1904), p. 72.

44. Samuel Isham, "Modern Portrait Painters," in A History of American Painting (New York, 1905); new edition with supplemental chapters by Royal Cortissoz (New York, 1927), p. 526.

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45. Ibid., pp. 521-25,529. In discussing the rigorous demands of portrait painting, due to its highly restrictive nature, Isham found the most successful portraitists to be either pupils of Carolus-Duran, including Beckwith, Sargent, and Wiles, or of Munich training, including Duveneck, Chase, and DeCamp, rather than École des Beaux-Arts trained artists whom, he said, "had too deep a conscience for drawing as the probity of art to slight it even for an instant. As has been seen, it served them far better than the Munich facility in other branches of art, but in portraiture . . . it seems to have paralyzed them.", p. 525.

46. Christian Brinton, "The Art of John W. Alexander," Munsey's Magazine 39 (September 1908): 744.

47. Arthur Hoeber, "John W. Alexander," International Studio 34, no. 135 (May 1908): lxxxix.

48. "John White Alexander," (April 1904), p. 474.

49. Universal Exposition St. Louis, "Foreword," in Official Catalogue, n. pag.

50. Alexander exhibited four paintings--A Quiet Hour, A Mother, A Butterfly, Study in Black and Green (catalogue numbers 1 through 4 respectively)--at the exhibition in Buffalo, held May 31 - September 2, 1906. See Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Catalogue (1906), pp. 7-9.

51. Alexander exhibited one painting, A Butterfly (catalogue number 16), in the Washington, D.C., exhibition, which was held February 7 - March 9, 1907. See Corcoran Gallery of Art, Catalogue of the First Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings By Contemporary American Artists (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1907), n.pag.

52. Ibid., p. 7.

53. Lloyd, "First Annual Exhibition," (March 1907), p. i.

54. "The National Note in Our Art - A Distinctive American Quality Dominant at the Pennsylvania Academy," The Craftsman 9, no. 6 (March 1906): 753.

55. Leila Mechlin, "Trend of American Art: With Notable Examples of Recent Painting," Cosmopolitan Magazine 41, no. 2 (June 1906): 182.

56. S[adakichi].H[artmann]. "Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," International Studio 29, no. 115 (September 1906): 266.

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57. Annie Nathan Meyer, "Art at the Pittsburgh Institute," Harper's Weekly 51, no. 2628 (May 4, 1907): 655.

58. Giles Edgerton [pseud. Mary Fanton Roberts], "American Art Scores a Triumph at International Exhibition of Painting at Pittsburgh," The Craftsman 14, no. 5 (August 1908): 464.

59. Christian Brinton, "The New Spirit in American Painting," The Bookman 27 (June 1908): 351.

60. Christian Brinton, "The Case for American Art," Century Magazine 77, no. 1 (November 1908): 141. Brinton noted that in contrast to a decade earlier, landscape painting now dominated over figure painting.

61. Ibid., p. 140.

62. Ibid.

63. John W. Alexander, "The Need of a National Academy and Its Value to the Growth of Art in America," The Craftsman 17, no. 6 (March 1910): 607-08.

64. John C. Van Dyke, "Preface," in American Painting and Its Tradition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), p. vi. For a discussion of American art's lack of tradition, see also Giles Edgerton, "The Younger American Painters: Are They Creating a National Art?" The Craftsman 13, no. 5 (February 1908): 512-32; and Bayard Boyesen, "The National Note in American Art," Putnam's Monthly and The Reader 4, no. 2 (May 1908): 131-40.

65. Letter dated May 24, 1905, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 605-06. See also "Current Art Events," International Studio 26, no, 101 (July 1905): xxx. Alexander probably knew Mr. Frew before this time as Alexander was a member of the Pittsburgh Art Commission. Richard Murray notes that Elihu Vedder had approached Mr. Frew about painting six decorative panels in the new Carnegie Library in 1894, for which he wished to receive $20,000.00 in "The Art of Decoration," in National Collection of Fine Arts, Perceptions and Evocations: The Art of Elihu Vedder (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), note 66, p. 239. This request predated the construction of the new wing, which Alexander was commissioned to decorate, by over ten years.

66. Many of the details of Alexander's receipt of the mural commission are recorded in Lockman interview, frames 180-82. Alexander submitted one sketch of the four central panels depicting "The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh" to Mr. Frew

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in 1906-07, which remains in the collection of the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute. The author has found no reference to other artists being considered for the commission, although it is reasonable to assume that the Board of Directors at the Carnegie Institute had a back-up plan in case Alexander declined the commission.

67. Several biographies have been written on Andrew Carnegie which briefly discuss the history of the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. See, for example, Burton J. Hendrick, The Life of Andrew Carnegie (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1932), two volumes; and George Swetman, Andrew Carnegie (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980). For a study of Carnegie's library philanthropy, see George S. Bobinski, Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), especially pp. 87-89. See also Henry Adams, "Introduction," in American Drawings and Watercolors in the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), pp. 5-6.

68. See "Carnegie's Stately Marble Gift to People Ready for Dedication," Pittsburgh Dispatch (April 7, 1907): 1-2.

69. "Art Notes," American Art News 4, no. 12 (December 30, 1905): 2.

70. The building's dedication and mural cycle were widely reported in the local press. See, for example, "Alexander Hall," Pittsburgh Post (April 7, 1907): 2, section 8; and "Apotheosis of Pittsburgh by Alexander: Famous Painter's Splendid Murals in East Entrance Stair Hall," Pittsburgh Dispatch (April 7, 1907): 6,8.

71. "Art and Artists," Pittsburgh Bulletin (October 10, 1908).

72. Elizabeth Alexander recalled, "The twenty one panels designed for the third floor were not far enough advanced at his death to place and these walls have been left with only a coat of toned paint to keep them from being out of key with the decorations of the lower studies." See Mrs. John W. Alexander, "The Crowning of Labor: The John W. Alexander Mural Paintings at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh," The Mentor 13, no. 4 (May 1925): 28-30.

73. The title "Fire" for the first floor frieze appears in Society of Mural Painters, Brochure of the Mural Painters. A National Society (New York: Society of Mural Painters, 1916), p. 63; "Toil" appears in "Apotheosis of Pittsburgh," (April 7, 1907): 6. There has been some confusion about the title of the entire series as well. It

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is often referred to as The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh, however that title refers specifically to the five central panels on the second floor.

74. "John White Alexander Tells How He Painted Institute Friezes," Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch (April 10, 1907): 8.

75. Emily R. Alter, "The Alexander Murals," Carnegie Magazine 7, no. 4 (September 1933): 104.

76. "Apotheosis of Pittsburgh," (April 7, 1907): 6.

77. See respectively Charles H. Caffin, "The New Mural Decorations of John W. Alexander," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 114, no. 684 (May 1907): 852; amd William Walton, "Alexander's Decorations in the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh," Scribner's Magazine 45, no. 1 (January 1909): 46-47..

78. See Leila Bailey Van Hook, "The Ideal Woman in American Art, 1875-1910" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1988), pp. 270-71. See also idem, "From the Lyrical to the Epic. Images of Women in American Murals at the Turn of the Century," Winterthur Portfolio 26, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 76-79.

79. Caffin, "Mural Decorations," p. 852.

80. Van Hook, "Lyrical to the Epic," p. 79.

81. Alexander painted the third floor murals in his summer studio in Seabright, New Jersey, where he had numerous models brought in from the village and vicinity to pose for the figures and thus insure the greatest variety. See Mrs. John W. Alexander, "The Crowning of Labor," pp. 30-31.

82. Selwyn Brinton, "Modern Mural Decoration in America," International Studio 42, no. 167 (January 1911): 190.

83. Birge Harrison, "The Future of American Art," North American Review 189, no. 638 (January 1909): 34.

84. Other exceptional early excursions into modern industrial subject matter in American mural painting were Frederic Dana Marsh's (1872-1961) "Engineering" for the library of the Engineering Societies, New York City (1910) and Everett Shinn's (1876-1953) murals for the Trenton City Hall (1911). For reproductions of examples of each cycle

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see respectively Edwin Howland Blashfield, Mural Painting in America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), opposite p. 176; and Milton W. Brown, American Painting From the Armory Show to the Depression (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 25. Marsh began a series of cartoons for mural decorations entitled "Cycles of Labour" as early as 1906. Alexander may in fact have been familiar with these works as Marsh was working in New York City at the time. See Arthur Hoeber, "Frederic Dana Marsh: Painter of Our Later-Day Industry," International Studio 28, no. 111 (May 1906): lxvii-lxxii for a discussion of this work.

85. Robert Henri, The Art Spirit (1923; rpt., Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960), p. 217.

86. Caffin, "Decorations of John W. Alexander," (May 1907), p. 856.

87. Charles H. Caffin, "Mural Painting in America," The Collector and Art Critic 5, no. 2 (December 1906): 57. See also idem, "Mural Painting - An Art of the People and a Record of the Nation's Development," The Craftsman 10 (April 1906): 54-66; and idem, "Some Notes on Mural Painting, in The Story of American Painting (New York, 1907) , pp. 325-31.

88. George Breed Zug, "Contemporary Mural Painting," Chatauquan 50 (April 1908): 246.

89. Walton, "Alexander's Decorations," p. 48.

90. Will H. Low, "National Expression in American Art," International Monthly 3, no. 3 (March 1901): 247-48.

91. Charles M. Shean, "Mural Painting From an American Point of View," The Craftsman 7, no. 1 (October 1904): 18-27. See also Irene Sargent, "Comments Upon Mr. Shean's Mural Painting From an American Point of View," The Craftsman 7, no. 1 (October 1904): 28-34.

92. Charles M. Shean, "The Decoration of Public Buildings: A Plea for Americanism in Subject and Ornamental Detail," Municipal Affairs 5 (1901): 720.

93. William A. Price, "Mural Painting in Relation to Architecture. The Importance of Establishing an Intimacy Between the Two," The Craftsman 16, no. 1 (April 1909): 5.

94. John C. Van Dyke, "John W. Alexander," in American Painting, p. 239.

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95. See, for example, Lewis Mumford, who said, "As for Alexander's murals in the Carnegie Institute, in which the mighty efforts of steelmakers were depicted in paint which would hardly do justice to the efforts of a lolly pop manufacturer," in The Brown Decades: A Study of Art in America 1865 - 1895 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), pp. 236-37; and Milton W. Brown, who applauded Everitt Shinn's 1911 murals for Trenton City Hall as among the first to treat contemporary industrial subject matter rather than an historical or allegorical scene in American mural painting, while discounting Alexander's cycle, largely because of its allegorical panels, "The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh" in American Painting From the Armory Show to the Depression (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 25. See also James D. Van Trump, "The Tenth Muse: Alexander's Murals at the Carnegie Institute," Carnegie Magazine 39, no. 2 (February 1965): 63-67.

96. Alexander's commission was noted in "Pictures for Harrisburg," New York Times (June 9, 1905): 2; and "Current Art Events," International Studio 26, no. 101 (July 1905): xxx. For information on the Pennsylvania State Capitol building and its decorations, see Charles H. Caffin, Handbook of the New Capitol of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: Pleasant Press, 1906); and Lewis Shifer Shimmell, The State Capitol of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, 1906 (Harrisburg: Telegraph Printing Co., 1907).

97. In a letter dated April 26, 1913 to John Beatty, Alexander said, "The State of Pennsylvania has extended the time for my decorations at Harrisburg for nearly two years as it is impossible for me to do anything on that work at present." See John White Alexander file, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute.

98. For a detailed study of the Pennsylvania State Capitol building and its decorations, see Pennsylvania State Capitol Preservation Committee, The Pennsylvania Capitol. A Documentary History (Princeton: Heritage Studies Inc., 1987), 4 volumes; see especially vol. 2, pp. 333-436.

99. The portrait of Worthington Whittredge was catalogue number 170 in the National Academy of Design's winter exhibition held December 14, 1907 - January 11, 1908, and was reproduced on the frontispiece of their illustrated catalogue. The 103rd annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts was held January 19 - February 29, 1908. This portrait was Alexander's only submission to both exhibitions.

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100. The exhibition was held February 24 - March 17, 1909. See National Arts Club, John W. Alexander Retrospective Exhibition (New York: National Arts Club, 1909).

101. Lockman interview, frame 204.

102. "A Retrospective Study of the Art of John W. Alexander," New York Times (February 28, 1909): 7 (part 6).

103. "Alexander's Work Seen in Retrospect," New York Times (February 24, 1909): 8.

104. J[ohn] Nilsen Laurvik, "John W. Alexander. An Analysis," Metropolitan Magazine 31 (December 1909): 369.

105. The exhibition was held December 10, 1909 - January 10, 1910. See Buffalo Academy of Fine Arts, Catalogue of a Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings by John W. Alexander (Buffalo: Buffalo Academy of Fine Arts, 1909).

106. Although the Alexanders began spending their summers in Onteora in 1904, Alexander did not build his studio there until 1912. Elizabeth Alexander later recalled, "It [the studio] had every kind of lighting that was ever known, so you could paint and shade things and get different effects. That was where most of the sunlight pictures were painted." Alexander often brought his models with them to Onteora to pose, including Ann Bradley. After Alexander died, the studio was purchased by artist Ben Ali Haggin (1882-1951), who was also a theatrical designer. See Lockman interview, frames 180-210. For information on the Onteora artists colony, see Sandra S. Phillips et al., Charmed Places: Hudson River Artists and Their Houses, Studios, and Vistas (New York: The Edith C. Blum Institute, Bard College and the Vassar College Art Gallery in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1988), pp. 77, 92-93. For information on Candace Wheeler's life and work, see her autobiography, Yesterday in a Busy Life (New York: Harper and Row, 1918); and Catherine Hoover Vorsanger in In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), pp. 481-83. For a contemporary reference to Alexander in Onteora, see "Onteora's Own County Fair," Ladies Home Journal 21, no. 8 (July 1904): 19. William H. Gerdts's study of regional painting in America does not specically address the Onteora artist colony but for information on other artist colonies in New York State, see idem, Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting, 1710-1920 (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), vol. I, pp. 134-223.

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107. For information on the Boston figure painters, see Bernice Leader, The Boston Lady as a Work of Art: Paintings by the Boston School at the Turn of the Century (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1986). For recent scholarship on the Ten, see William H. Gerdts, "The Ten: A Critical Chronology," in Ten American Painters (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 1990), pp. 8-81. The author thanks Dr. Gerdts for pointing out the possible parallels between Alexander's stylistic choices after his repatriation and the work of the Boston figure painters after 1900.

108. Philip L. Hale, "Paintings Shown by Ten American Artists," Boston Herald (November 11, 1906), p. 30, as quoted in Gerdts, "A Critical Chronology," p. 34. Tarbell's A Girl Crocheting is discussed by Carol Lowry in Ten American Painters, pp. 162-65.

109. See Gerdts, "A Critical Chronology," p. 28. In 1904 the earliest monograph on Vermeer was published in the United States, thought to have been written by Philip Hale; in 1913 Hale published a full-length volume on the Dutch painter. See Vermeer (Boston: Bates and Guild Company, 1904); and Philip L. Hale, Jan Vermeer of Delft (Boston: Samll, Maynard and Company, 1913). For information on Hale's publications on Vermeer, see William H. Gerdts, "Impressionism in the United States," in Norma Broude, ed., World Impressionism (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), p. 64. See also Bernice Kramer Leader, "The Boston School and Vermeer," Arts Magazine 55 (November 1980): 127-76.

110. See Gerdts, "A Critical Chronology," p. 50.

111. "Three Beautiful Exhibitions: John W. Alexander, Hermann Dudley Murphy, Small Bronzes," Academy Notes 5, no. 1 (January 1910): 30.

112. Lockman interview, frame 204. The Tenth Muse had compositional parallels with Velázquez's Las Meninas, 1656 (Museo del Prado, Madrid), the Spanish baroque master's portrait about the act of portrayal. Alexander depicts himself facing the viewer with his palette in his left hand. The canvas on which he is painting is shown from the rear and is cut off laterally at the left edge of the composition. Velázquez's work was undoubtedly familiar to Alexander from his travels to Madrid in the 1880s.

113. Elizabeth Luther Cary, "Progress in American Portraiture," Cosmopolitan Magazine 47, no. 5 (October 1909): 557.

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114. For a history of the National Academy of Design, see Eliot Candee Clark, History of the National Academy of Design, 1825 - 1953 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954). In 1975 two catalogues were published celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Academy. See Lois Marie Fink and Joshua Taylor, Academy: The Academic Tradition in American Art (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975); and National Academy of Design, A Century and A Half of American Art (New York: National Academy of Design, 1975). Alexander's election of presidency on May 13, 1909 is recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1730, frame [ ].

115. Letter to Alexander from Leon Dabo dated May 15, 1909, recorded in JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 727-35.

116. Information on Alexander's administrative activities for the promotion of American art is drawn from various sources, much from JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames 1100-30. For information about the School Art League, which was organized in February 1911, see "School Art League, New York," Art and Progress 3, no. 7 (May 1912): 595. A list of the ten founding organizations of the National Academy Association appears in "Plan For A Great Art Gallery, New York," International Studio 46, no. 183 (May 1912): lxxvi.

117. Alexander, "National Academy," p. 607.

118. Ibid., p. 607.

119. Ibid., p. 608.

120. See, for example, "There is No Art Center, J. W. Alexander Says," New York Times (February 3, 1910): 2; "Suggests New Site For Art Home Here," New York Times (February 26, 1910): 8; "National Academy Seeks a New Site," New York Times (July 7, 1910): 2; "Says We Need Art Galleries," New York Times (September 19, 1910): 4; and "Even Richmond, Indiana Has a Better Art Exhibition Than New York," New York Times Sunday Magazine (September 25, 1910): 10.

121. Giles Edgerton [pseud. Mary Fanton Roberts], "What Does the National Academy of Design Stand For, Has it at Present a Value to the American Art Public?" The Craftsman 15, no. 5 (February 1909): 520.

122. Ibid., p. 530.

123. See Robert Henri, "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring From the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression. A Suggestion for a New Art

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School," The Craftsman 15, no. 4 (January 1909): 386-401. For recent scholarship on "The Eight" and their role in the nationalist debate in American art, see Elizabeth Milroy, Painters of the New Century: The Eight and American Art (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991).

124. James Gibbons Huneker, "What is the Matter with our National Academy? Two Spring Picture Shows Compared," Harper's Weekly 56, no. 2885 (April 6, 1912): 8.

125. Ibid., p. 8.

126. Alexander, "Art Outlook," pp. 575-78.

127. Edgerton, "American Art," p. 463.

128. L.[eila] Mechlin, "Some American Figure Painters," International Studio 39, no. 155 (January 1910): 185.

129. Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., "The Luxembourg and American Painting," Scribner's Magazine 47, no. 40 (March 1910): 381.

130. Sunlight was first exhibited at the winter exhibition of the National Academy of Design, December 11, 1909 - January 9, 1910, catalogue number 192. See National Academy of Design, Illustrated Catalogue, National Academy of Design Winter Exhibition 1909 (New York: National Academy of Design, 1909), pp. 43-44.

131. The exhibition was held April 27 - June 13, 1911; Sunlight was catalogue number 3. The medal of first class carried with it a $1,500.00 award. See Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1911), n. pag. For notices of the award see "Awards at Carnegie Exhibit," New York Times (April 28, 1911): 11; and "Pittsburgh, U.S.A.," International Studio 44, no. 174 (August 1911): 166-67.

132. The exhibition opened at the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, November 16 - December 15, 1911. It then travelled to the Art Institute of Chicago, January 1912, St. Louis Art Museum, February 1912, and Boston Museum of Fine Arts, March 1912. The exhibitions were nearly identical, although Alexander exhibited Isabella and the Pot of Basil (catalogue number 2) at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts as the work was in their permanent collection. See Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Catalogue of An Exhibition of Works by the Members of the Société de Peintres et de Sculpteurs (Formerly the Société Nouvelle) (Boston: The Metcalf Press, 1912), pp. 8-10. For a list of exhibitions and dates of the Société de

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Peintres et de Sculpteurs from 1905 to 1912, see Alain Beausaire, Quand Rodin Exposait (Paris: Editions du Musée Rodin, 1989), pp. 267-330.

133. For a discussion of this work and the exhibition of the Société de Peintres et de Sculpteurs in Buffalo, see Christian Brinton, "French Art in America," International Studio 45, no. 179 (January 1912): lv-lxvii.

134. The classic essay on the window metaphor in Romantic painting is Lorenz Eitner's, "The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," The Art Bulletin 37, no. 4 (December 1955): 281-90.

135. This work is discussed in Burke, "John White Alexander," p. 212.

136. "Instances of Modern Tendencies in Art in the Landscape and Subject Pictures on Exhibition at the Academy," New York Times Sunday Magazine (December 17, 1911): 15. The exhibition was held at the National Academy of Design December 9, 1911 - January 7, 1912; The Ring was catalogue number 331 and was illustrated in National Academy of Design, Illustrated Catalogue of the Winter Exhibition, 1911 (New York: National Academy of Design, 1911), p. 38.

137. Van Dyke, "John White Alexander," pp. 230-31.

138. E. C., "Philadelphia," International Studio 46, no. 184 (June 1912): 240.

139. Other traditionalist critics include Royal Cortissoz, Kenyon Cox, and Frank J. Mather, Jr. For a discussion of early twentieth-century criticism with respect to the debate on nationalism in American art and on modernism, see H. Wayne Morgan, "Modernism and a New Century," in New Muses: Art in American Culture, 1865 - 1920 (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), pp. 145-82. Although of limited usefulness, see also Peninah R. Y. Petruck, American Art Criticism, 1910 - 1939 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981).

140. For contemporary accounts of the organization and the first exhibition of the National Association of Portrait Painters, see "National Association of Portrait Painters," International Studio 46, no. 181 (March 1912): xxxvii-xxxviii.; "Good Examples of Modern Portraiture in the First Exhibition of the National Association of Portrait Painters," New York Times Sunday Magazine (March 24, 1912): 15; and G. Mortimer Marke, "The National Association of Portrait Painters. A New American Group," Arts and

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Decoration 2 (May 1912): 258-60. Michael Quick discusses the organization in "1870 - 1920," pp. 74-76; see especially note 13, p. 76, for a complete list of original members and a detailed account of where and when the annual exhibitions were held. Alexander exhibited with the National Association of Portrait Painters for two more years.

141. The exhibition was held March 18 - April 6, 1912. See National Association of Portrait Painters, Catalogue of the National Association of Portrait Painters (New York: Reinhardt Galleries, 1912). The catalogue illustrated all the works in the exhibition. Alexander's submission, Portrait, was catalogue number 1.

142. Christian Brinton, "International Art at Pittsburgh," International Studio 46, no. 184 (June 1912): lxxxv.

143. Alice T. Searle, "Exhibition of the National Association of Portrait Painters," International Studio 46, no. 183 (May 1912): lxiii-lxiv.

144. The painting's installation was noted in, ibid., p. lxiv.

145. "First Exhibition of the National Association of Portrait Painters," p. 15.

146. Marke, "The National Association of Portrait Painters," p. 259.

147. The exhibition was held April 25 - June 13, 1912. Alexander was on the jury of award and exhibited two paintings; Portrait of Miss Maude Adams and Phyllis, catalogue numbers 2 and 3 respectively. See Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Sixteenth Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1912), n. pag.

148. The Alexanders trip to Europe with Maude Adams in 1911 is recorded in Lockman interview, frames 208-10. Alexander's most important contribution to set design was his innovation of using translucent materials through which colored lights were projected to create light absorbing rather than light reflecting backgrounds. For notices of Alexander's activities in the theater, see, for example, "John W. Alexander Goes Abroad," New York Times (July 14, 1910): 7; "John W. Alexander Invents New Stage Scenery," New York Times Sunday Magazine (February 26, 1911): 11; and, Homer Saint-Gaudens, "John W. Alexander in the Theatre," American Magazine of Art 7, no. 9 (July 1916), pp. 365-71. For a study of Alexander's role in set and costume design

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for the theater and its relationship to his decorative painting style, see the author's "John White Alexander and the Theater," forthcoming.

149. For information on Maude Adams, see Phyllis Robbins, Maude Adams. An Intimate Portrait (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1956.) See also Will South, Making and Breaking Tradition. A History of the Salt Lake Art Center (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1991), pp. 8-9.

150. Brinton, "International Art," p. lxxv.

151. The exhibition was held December 17, 1912 - January 26, 1913; The Gossip was catalogue number 123. See Corcoran Gallery of Art, Catalogue of the Fourth Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Contemporary American Artists (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1912), n. pag. For reviews of the exhibition, see "The Corcoran Exhibition," The Nation 96, no. 2479 (January 2, 1913): 19-20; and E. C. "Washington," International Studio 49, no. 193 (March 1913): 75-78. In a letter from Elizabeth Alexander to Mr. McIntyre dated October 22, 1928, she states that the model for The Gossip, The Ring, June, and The Window was Belle Edson, daughter of a local farmer in Onteora, who posed for Alexander for four consecutive summers. See Philadelphia Museum of Art, John White Alexander file.

152. This work was first exhibited at the National Academy of Design's winter annual, December 14, 1912 - January 12, 1913, catalogue number 406. See National Academy of Design, Illustrated Catalogue of the Winter Exhibition, 1912 (New York: National Academy of Design, 1912), p. 44.

153. J. Walter McSpadden, "John White Alexander. The Painter of the Flowing Line," in Famous Painters of America (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1916), pp. 357-76.

154. The exhibition was held March 21 - April 21, 1914; June was catalogue number 309. See National Academy of Design, Illustrated Catalogue of the 89th Annual Exhibition (New York: National Academy of Design, 1914), p. 38. This painting is discussed briefly in William H. Gerdts and Russell Burke, American Still-Life Painting (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 207,209.

155. Alexander served on the jury of award at the exhibition which was held April 13 - June 13, 1914; Her Birthday was catalogue number 5. See Carnegie Institute, Catalogue of the Eighteenth Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1914), n. pag. The annual international exhibitions at the

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Carnegie Institute were suspended during the war. The next annual exhibition, the 19th, was held in 1920.

156. See, for example, W. H. De B. Nelson, "Pittsburgh International, 1914," International Studio 52, no. 208 (June 1914): cx. For a discussion of Alexander's flowers within the context of American still life painting, see William H. Gerdts, Painters of the Humble Truth. Masterpieces of American Still Life, 1801 - 1939 (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 1981), p. 146.

157. Nelson, "Pittsburgh," p. cv.

158. Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Painter of Women," The Stylus 1, no. 2 (January 1910): 1-2.

159. Sidney Allan [pseud. Sadakichi Hartmann], "Masters in Portraiture - John W. Alexander," Wilson's Photographic Magazine 47, no. 641 (May 1910): 214-18. Hartmann wrote dozens of articles about this subject which appeared monthly in Wilson's Photographic Magazine from August 1909 - December 1910, and then intermittently through the end of 1912.

160. Ibid., p. 217.

161. Ibid., p. 218.

162. Charles H. Caffin, "John W. Alexander. Living American Painters - Fourth Article," Arts and Decoration 1, no. 4 (February 1911): 147-49,178.

163. Ibid., pp. 148-9.

164. Elbert F. Baldwin, "John W. Alexander, Painter," The Outlook 95 (May 28, 1910): 172.

165. Ibid., p. 176.

166. Letter from Henry B. Snell to Alexander dated April 13, 1915, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames [735-850].

167. Letter to Mrs. Allan dated May 22, 1915, JWA/AAA, reel 1728, frames [800-50].

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CONCLUSION

At the end of the nineteenth century John White Alexander was one of America's leading expatriate artists and a foremost practitioner of a decorative figure painting style that assured his international recognition and success. Based on an elegant flowing line, Alexander's decorative style subordinated the reality of appearance to pictorial concerns. He willfully manipulated female figures, and in particular their gowns, for decorative effect within a structured surface pattern. Alexander's decorative vocabulary utilized elegant linear contours, simplification and flattening of form through two-dimensional patterning and a lack of detail, asymmetrical compositions, and a limited tonal palette with a single dominant tone. Relative indifference to the personality of the sitter--the figures are often shown with their faces averted or completely obscured from the viewer--further underscored the aesthetic rather than representational motive in his works. Alexander's Parisian period (1892-1901), during which time he fully articulated his decorative style, was his most inventive and productive. Moreover, the currency of his style, as demonstrated by his active participation in several international art societies and overwhelming critical approbation in the 1890s, was proportional to his synthesis and expression of many of the

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stylistic and aesthetic tendencies of the period including internationalism and cosmopolitanism, art nouveau, the predominance of decorative figure painting, the primacy of formal concerns with little regard to subject matter per se, realism, or national expression, and the rise of mural painting.

After repatriating to the United States in 1901 with the glow of international success, Alexander resumed his career as a portraitist in the decorative style he had articulated in Paris. The number of portrait commissions attested to the vast popularity and currency of his style. In addition to accepting a commission for a monumental mural decoration at the Carnegie Institute (1905-08), Alexander assumed a bewildering number of responsibilities in the promotion and administration of American art. These activities culminated in his election to the position of president of the National Academy of Design in 1909, a post he maintained until shortly before his untimely death in 1915. Alexander's zealous commitment to the cause of American art taxed his resources to their limits. The slackening of production of work and attendant coarsening of his decorative style were casualties of his fevered involvement with public service in the arts.

Coincident with Alexander's repatriation was the gradual erosion of the internationalism of American art and the decline of the expatriate movement in general. The

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articulation of nationalism--that is, a distinct and identifiable American language of art--increasingly dominated American art exhibitions and critical discussion in the first years of the twentieth century. Alexander's complex relationship to and expression of the fundamental shift in American art from internationalism to nationalism in the early years of the twentieth century is paradigmatic of this complicated movement as a whole. The international context, in which Alexander flourished, provided the foil against which nationalism would and could evolve. After nearly a quarter of a century of American art's engagement with and emulation of international art trends and practices, American art had come of age and was prepared, for the first time, to generate an artistic dialogue that was both vital and self-referential. While foreign training was de rigueur for American artists in the 1870s and 1880s to learn academic techniques, find exotic and artistic subject matter, and become fluent with internationally current art practices in order to compete with foreign artists for patronage, vastly improved art conditions in the United States by the turn of the twentieth century diminished the urgency of extended European study and travel. Moreover, the desire to imprint a distinctly national voice on American art inspired American expatriate artists to return home. Alexander's decision to return permanently to the United States in 1901 was his most

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striking response to these changes. Alexander's gradual yet determined shift away from internationalism and toward nationalism was paralleled in American art as a whole which struggled to define itself in the first years of the twentieth century. His attempts to accommodate and adapt the vocabulary of his decorative style, which had been articulated in a decidedly international context, to a new interest in nationalism characterized Alexander's work for the rest of his career.

At the time of Alexander's death in 1915, his fame was widespread despite the fact that his decorative style had grown less daring and more conservative. In light of Alexander's acknowledged stature, it is not surprising that most of the obituary notices and critical eulogies which appeared in the American and European press were highly laudatory. Several memorial exhibitions were held in 1916 and 1917. The largest of these was organized by the Carnegie Institute and featured 82 paintings from Alexander's entire career, although the majority of works were from his post-expatriate period.[1] The exhibition attempted to present a definitive and broad view of Alexander's career and to establish his rightful place in the annals of American art history. John Beatty, Fine Arts Director of the Carnegie Institute wrote, "John Alexander's record of achievement is one of the brilliant pages in the history of American art and the estimate in which he is held

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by the great painters of our time is the confirmation of the success he had won."[2] In addition to reproducing several paintings from the exhibition, there was a detailed biographical essay by John Beatty, a bibliography, and a register of paintings compiled by Elizabeth Alexander. Although incomplete and, at times, quite inaccurate, the extensive list provided a record of Alexander's career and divided his production into three distinct areas: portraits, that is commissioned works; paintings or non-commissioned figure subjects, landscapes, and still-lives; and mural decorations.[3]

In 1919, Portrait gris (fig. 30), the painting which definitively signalled Alexander's arrival in the international art arena at his Paris Salon debut in 1893, was included in an exhibition in Paris at the Musée du Luxembourg.[4] The exhibition, which had been originally scheduled to take place before the outbreak of the World War I, presented an overview of the American paintings in the collection of the Musée du Luxembourg. The exhibition featured a variety of styles and subject matters although decorative figure painting predominated. Moreover, most of the artists represented had significant tenures in Europe; their cosmopolitan styles demonstrated the internationalism of American art at the turn of the century when many of the works were purchased. Léonce Bénédite addressed the rapport between l'école américaine and l'école française in his

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prefatory statement to the exhibition: "Open the present catalogue and look at the name of each artist's master or school; nine times out of ten you will find the academies of Montmartre or Montparnasse or our own École des Beaux-Arts. Their teachers are the same as those who led our own generation of artists."[5] Ironically and quite inadvertently, the exhibition provided a final retrospective glance at American works, such as Alexander's, whose cosmopolitanism and former currency on an international scale were matched by and in fact assured their future neglect and disregard. Portrait gris, for example, has not been exhibited since 1919.

The decline of Alexander's fame and reputation after his death was a swift and nearly as decisive as was his meteoric rise to international acclaim in Paris in the 1890s. However, the collapse of his reputation as an artist was not an isolated incident but rather was shared by most of Alexander's cosmopolitan colleagues and reflected fundamental changes in American art's attitudes and directions. As much as international influences have informed American art, to varying degrees, from its very beginning, the vicissitudes of internationalism have affected the physiognomy of American art history. Unlike historians at the turn of the twentieth century--Samuel Isham, Charles Caffin, and Sadakichi Hartmann, among others

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--who acknowledged and applauded the accomplishments of cosmopolitan artists, American art, literary, and cultural historians, writing in the period between the two World Wars, culled the rich and complex period of the late nineteenth century for evidence of a native tradition of American realism.[6] Coincident with the general mood of isolationism and nationalism, the search for an American iconography led writers to either reject the production of artists such as Alexander whose careers could not be extricated from their international matrix, or to selectively consider only the reassuringly "American" aspects of artists' careers. The isolation of Thomas Eakins from cosmopolitanism, for example, and the minimization of the importance of his foreign academic training that informed early interpretations of his career is perhaps the most well-known example of this trend in American art historical scholarship. Writers repeated Eakins's advice to art students in 1914 to "remain in America to peer deeper into the heart of America," as vindication of their cultural nationalist agenda.[7]

Concurrent with this cultural nationalist agenda was the articulation of a formalist discourse whose defense of modernism was characterized both by the oversimplified notion of evolutionary logic--the by now familiar successions of "isms"--leading inexorably to formal abstraction and the wholesale rejection of academicism and

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"official" art. The exclusion of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from traditional art historical narratives on late nineteenth-century European art, despite its vital importance as corroborated by numerous contemporary observers, is symptomatic of the attempt to present a falsely coherent picture of a period. Thus, artists such as Alexander suffered on two fronts: their cosmopolitanism and international relevance was antipathetic to the development of a native realist tradition in American art; their artistic production, despite its concern with formal issues, was found to be inept and ultimately inconsequential for the development of modernism as it fell outside of the narrowly prescribed path leading toward rigorous abstraction.

The aim of this dissertation on John White Alexander has been to reconsider his career within the cultural and aesthetic matrix of the period in which he practiced and in the light of the international spirit of the time. Examination of the extensive contemporary critical literature, the organizations in which he participated, and the works of artists with whom he exhibited reveal his artistic production and activities as a clear articulation of some of the major aesthetic and stylistic concerns of the period including internationalism and cosmopolitanism, the predominance of decorative figure painting, the primacy of formal concerns and decorative aesthetics which at the time was understood and discussed as modern, the rise of mural

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painting, and the resurgence of nationalism in American art in the first years of the twentieth century.

In his discussion of American art and its tradition written in 1919, four years after Alexander's death, traditionalist critic John C. Van Dyke analyzed the careers and achievements of Alexander and other cosmopolitan artists of the post-Civil War generation and their role in the development of modern American art. Van Dyke identified their establishment of formal concerns as the grammar of art as the most significant contribution of these artists and the foundation, or tradition as he called it, upon which to build the future of American art. With respect to Alexander's decorative style he wrote:

> How far does this contribution carry? Well, little farther than the decorative surface of the canvas. The handsome, well-gowned, and well-bred young woman who holds the rose or ring or bell is only part of a color pattern on the canvas. She does not symbolize or signify much of anything beyond that. You could not guess if she has a brain or a heart or a soul. She is not a document, a problem, or even a character. Alexander did not believe that painting was a means of epitomizing abstract ideas but merely a way of revealing graceful color patterns that please the eye and hang harmoniously upon the wall. There is nothing intensive or dramatic or narrative about his work. It is not sentimental or emotional or passion-strung. . . . The painter meant to stop with the completed pattern.

Confident in the inherent value of Alexander's decorative style with respect to the development of American art, he concluded:

> All of them [Alexander and his cosmopolitan colleagues such as Chase and Sargent] working

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> together with a common energy and enthusiasm, have created a body of belief as to what constitutes a style and skill in art. They have established a tradition based on sound craftsmanship than which nothing could be safer or better for the future of American art. It was Alexander's part to help lay the foundation-stones. War or national madness or economic change may prevent any splendid palace of art arising therefrom, but at least Alexander and his contemporaries builded the firm foundation--builded perhaps better than they knew.[8]

Another observer agreed with Van Dyke that Alexander's decorative style was his most significant contribution to the development of art in America and corroborated what Alexander's best paintings make clear: "To conclude that he was a painter of external things would not be true to the fact. When he chose he could analyze character as well as anybody, but it is undeniable that he was largely in search of the decorative."[9]

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ENDNOTES: CONCLUSION

1. The John White Alexander Memorial Exhibition was held at the Carnegie Institute March 1916. Smaller memorial exhibitions were held at the Detroit Museum of Art (November 1916), Art Institute of Chicago (December 1916 - January 1917), Cincinnati Art Museum (January 1917), City Art Museum, St. Louis (April 1917), and Colorado Springs Art Society (May 1917). Although many of Alexander's most known paintings were displayed at all five exhibitions, such as Isabella and the Pot of Basil, Mrs. Wheaton, and Portrait of Rodin, there were minor variations at each venue.

2. J[ohn]. W[esley]. B[eatty]., "A Few Words of Appreciation," in Carnegie Institute, John White Alexander Memorial Exhibition, pp. 8-9.

3. See Carnegie Institute, "Record of Paintings by John White Alexander," pp. 37-61.

4. See Musée National du Luxembourg, Exposition d'Artistes de l'École Américaine (Paris: Musée National du Luxembourg, 1919). The exhibition was held in November 1919.

5. "Ouvrez le présent catalogue, régardez à la suite du nom du chaque artiste le nom de leurs écoles et de leurs maîtres, neuf fois sur dix vous tombez sur des académies de Montmartre ou de Montparnasse ou sur notre grande École officielle et sur les maîtres qui ont dirigé nos propres générations." Léonce Bénédite, "Avant-Propos," in Exposition d'Artistes de l'École Américaine, p. v. For reviews of the exhibition, see "Une Exposition d'Artistes Américains au Luxembourg," L'Art et les Artistes 1, no. 3 (November 1919), pp. 134-6; and Léopold Honoré, "Exposition d'Artistes de l'École Américaine. Musée du Luxembourg," Le Journal des Arts 41, no. 62 (October 25, 1919), p. 1.

6. See, for example, Van Wyck Brooks, New England: Indian Summer, 1865 - 1915 (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940); Malcolm Cowley, After the Genteel Tradition: American Writers Since 1910 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1937); and Lewis Mumford, The Brown Decades. A Study in the Arts in America, 1865 - 1895 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932). For a modern reading of the systematic rejection of cosmopolitanism and internationalism of American art of the late nineteenth century, see H. Barbara Weinberg, "Late-Nineteenth-Century Painting: Cosmopolitan Concerns and

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Critical Controversies," Archives of American Art Journal 23, no. 4 (1983), pp. 19-26.

7. Lloyd Goodrich, Thomas Eakins, His Life and Work (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1933), p. 139, as quoted in H. Barbara Weinberg, "The Lure of Paris. Late-Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Training," in Museum of Fine Art, A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting. 1760 - 1910 (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1983), p. 17.

8. John C. Van Dyke, American Painting and Its Tradition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), pp. 229-30 and 242.

9. Eugen Neuhaus, "John White Alexander," in The History and Ideals of American Art (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. 221.

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Fig. 1. John White Alexander (c.1908-1910)

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Fig. 2. Study Head of Munich Peasant (c. 1878-1879, Taft Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio)

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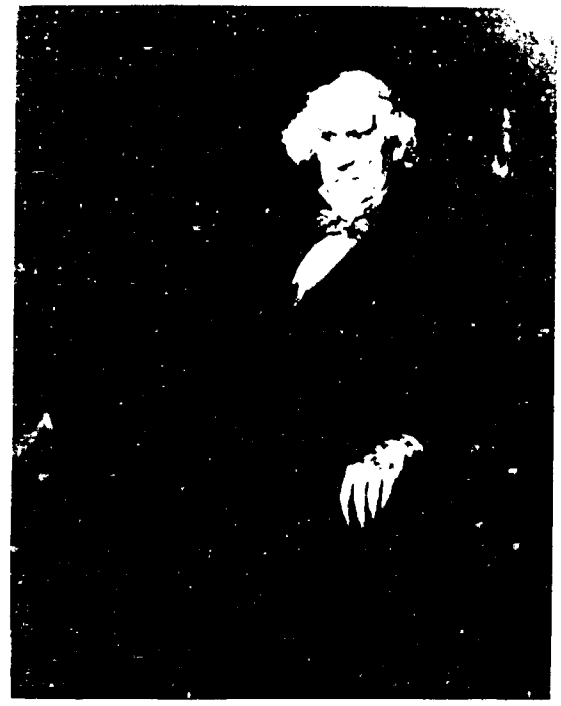

Fig. 3. Thurlow Weed (1881, NAD)

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Fig. 4. Portrait of Miss Mary (1881, Photo: John White Alexander Papers, AAA)

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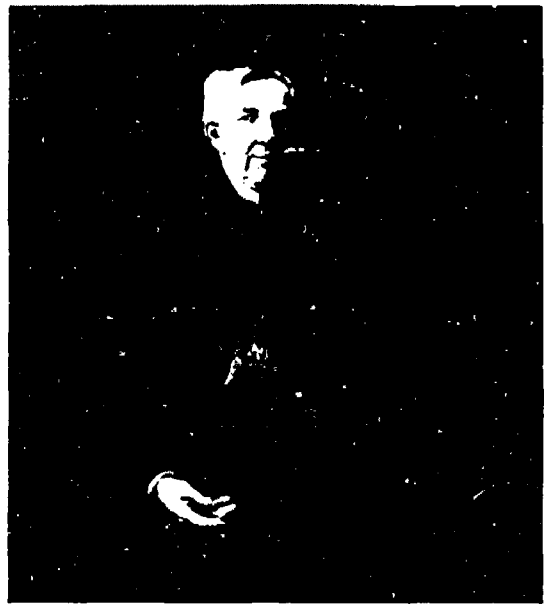

Fig. 5. Oliver Wendell Holmes (1883, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

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Fig. 6. Mr. Cole (1881, Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts)

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Fig. 7. Joseph Jefferson as "Bob Acres" (1883-1884, Player's Club, New York)

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Fig. 8. Mrs. Samuel Tilton (c. 1884, MFAB)

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Fig. 9. Azalea (Portrait of Charlotte Colgate Abbe), (1885, HRM)

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Fig. 10. Hogarth's Line of Beauty (Photo: H. R. Poore, Pictorial Composition, 1903, p. 124.)

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Fig. 11. John Milton Hay (1886, AAIAL)

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Fig. 12. John Burroughs (1886, AAIAL)

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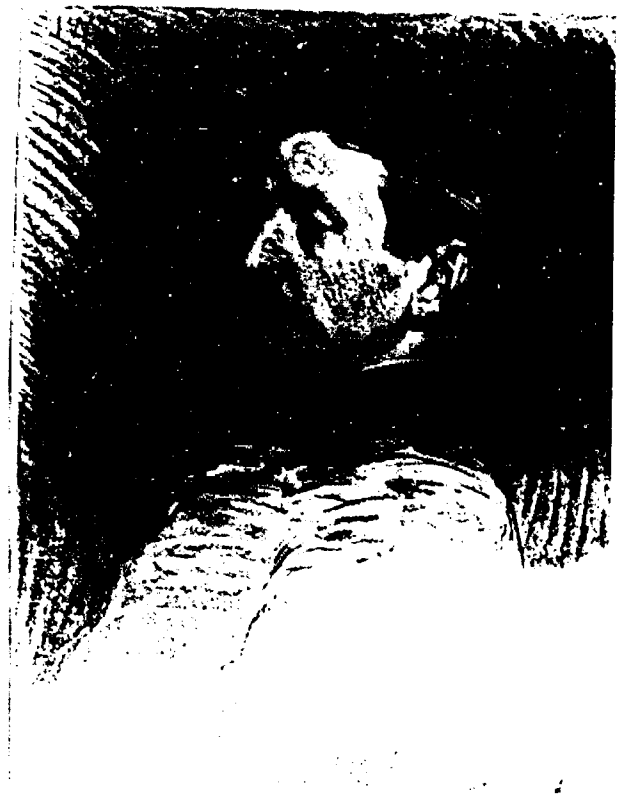

Fig. 13. Frank Stockton (1886, CMA)

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Fig. 14. Frank Stockton (1886, Photo: Century Magazine (July 1886), p. 413.)

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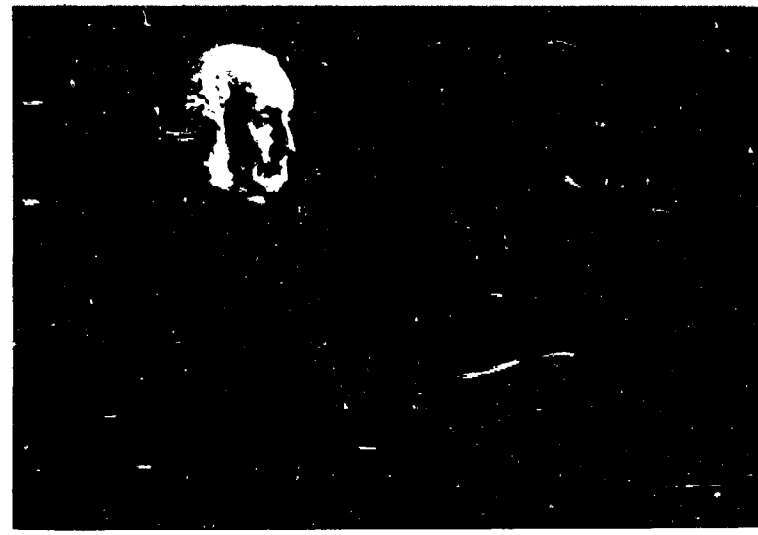

Fig. 15. James McCosh (1886, The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey)

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Fig. 16. Robert Louis Stevenson (1886, Photo: Century Magazine (April 1888), p. 868.

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Fig. 17. George Bancroft (1886, Photo: Century Magazine (January 1887), frontispiece.)

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Fig. 18. Portrait of Whistler (1886, MMA)

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Fig. 19. John Gilbert as "Sir Peter Teazle" (1886, Photo: Century Magazine (January 1887), p. 378.

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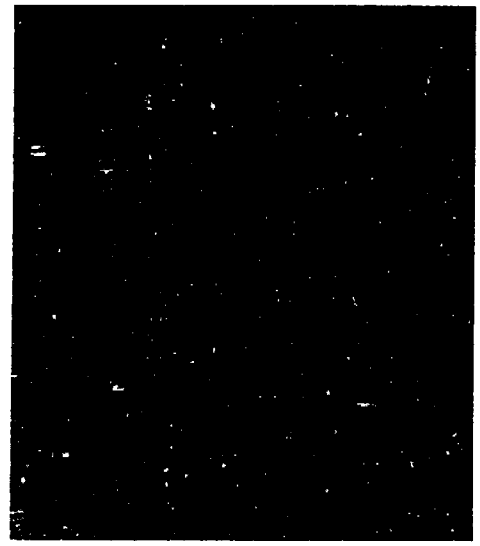

Fig. 20. Walt Whitman (1886, AAIAL)

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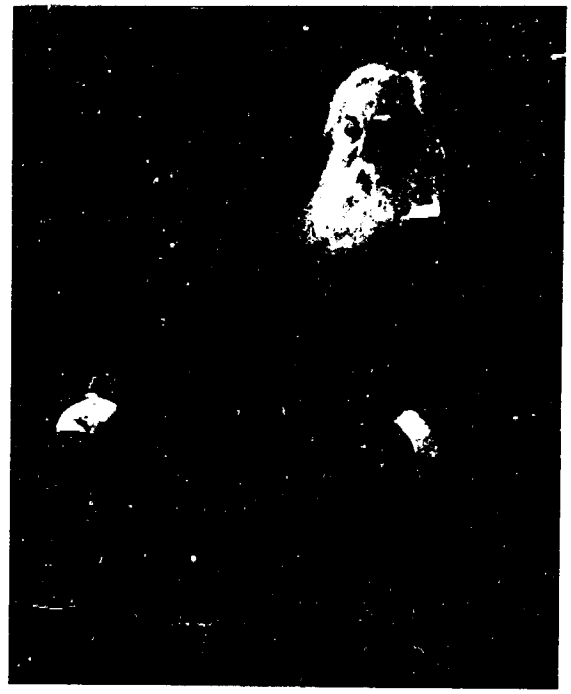

Fig. 21. Walt Whitman (1886-1889, MMA)

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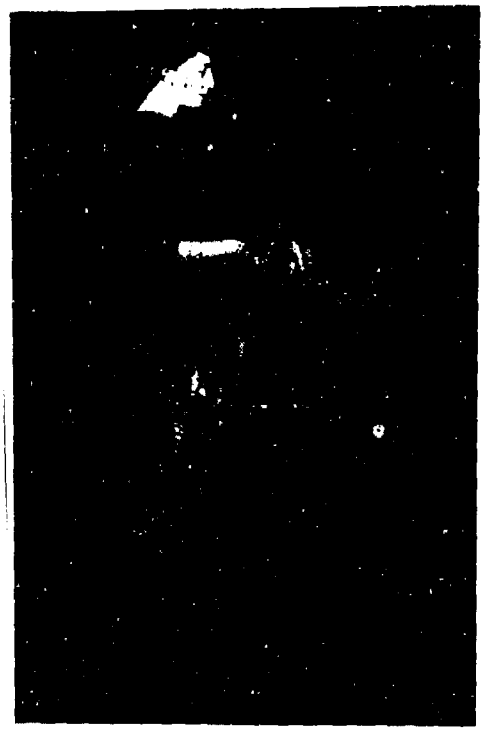

Fig. 22. Mrs. Draper (1888, New York Public Library)

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Fig. 23. Landscape (c. 1886, Photo: Grand Central Art Galleries, Tonalism: An American Experience (1982), p. 58.

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Fig. 24. Roses (c. 1886, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Correspondences (1985), p. 5.

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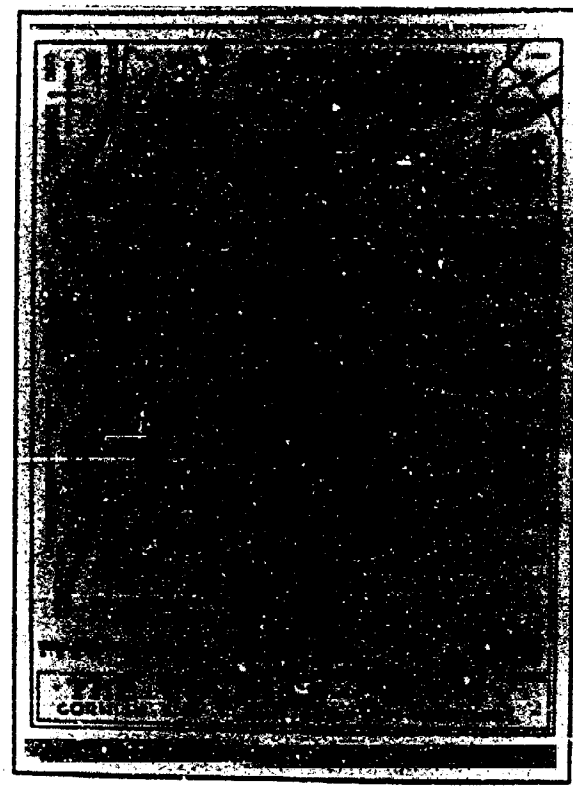

Fig. 25. The Cornish Colony (Photo: University Art Galleries, University of New Hampshire, A Circle of Friends: Art Colonies of Cornish and Dublin (1985), p. 57.

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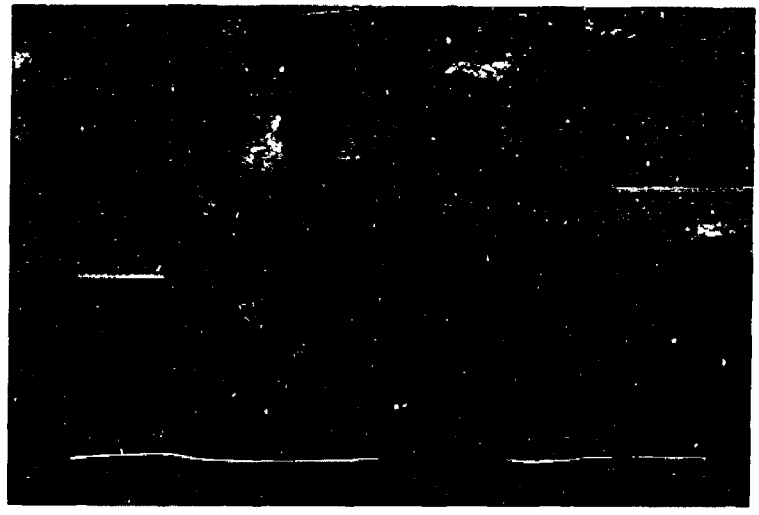

Fig. 26. Landscape, Cornish, New Hampshire (c. 1890, NMMA)

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Fig. 27. Landscape Cornish, New Hampshire (c. 1890, Richard York Gallery, New York)

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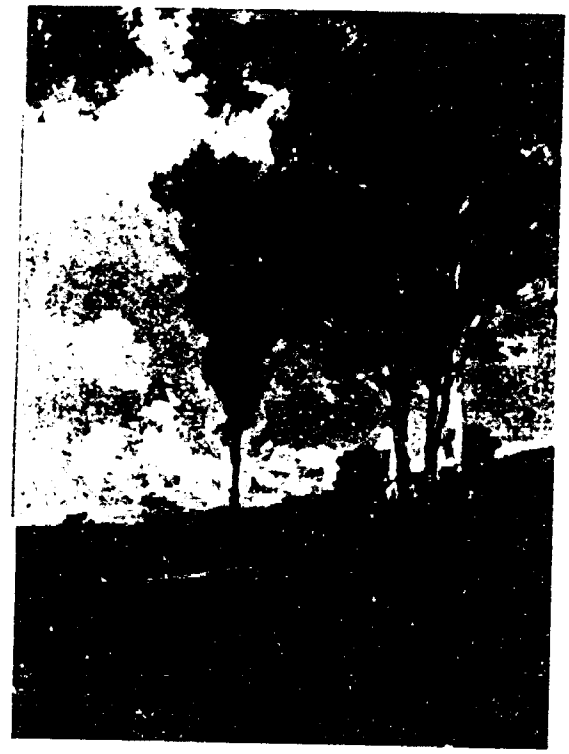

Fig. 28. Birches, Cornish, N.H. (1890, private collection)

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Fig. 29. Landscape, Le Pouldu (c. 1892, private collection)

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Fig. 30. Portrait gris (1893, MdO)

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Fig. 31. Portrait (c. 1893, Photo: International Studio (August 1900), p. 72.

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Fig. 32. Mr. Mosenthal (1893, NAD)

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Fig. 33. Portrait (Changeable Taffeta) (1894, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Correspondences (1985), p. 8.

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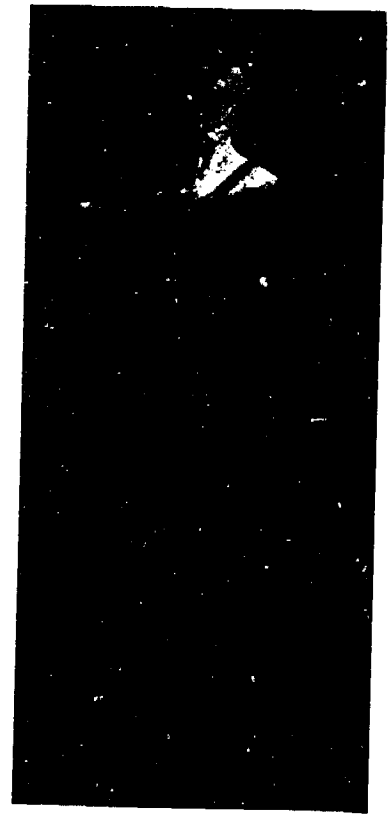

Fig. 34. Portrait (Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5692.)

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Fig. 35. Portrait of Fritz Thaulow (1894, Photo: W. P. Wilstach Collection Auction (October 1954), illustration 53.

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Fig. 36. Le piano (1894, Photo: Scribner's Magazine (March 1899), p. 341.)

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Fig. 37. Panel for Music Room (1894, DIA)

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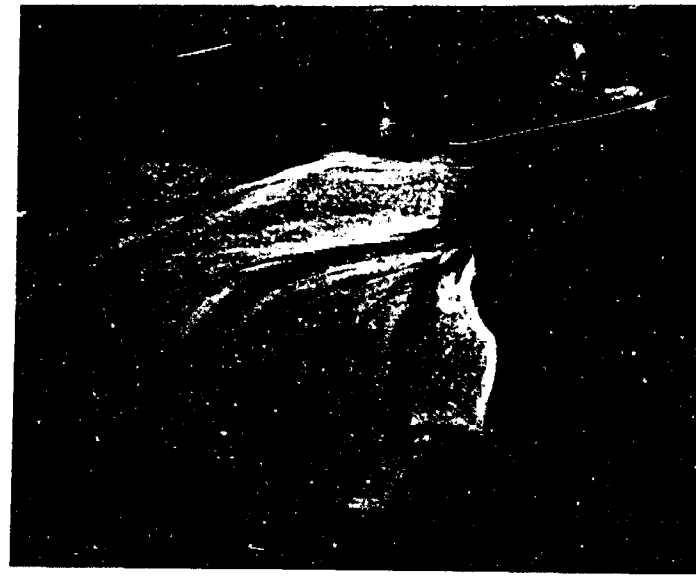

Fig. 38. Repose (1895, MMA)

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Fig. 39. Alethea (1895, private collection)

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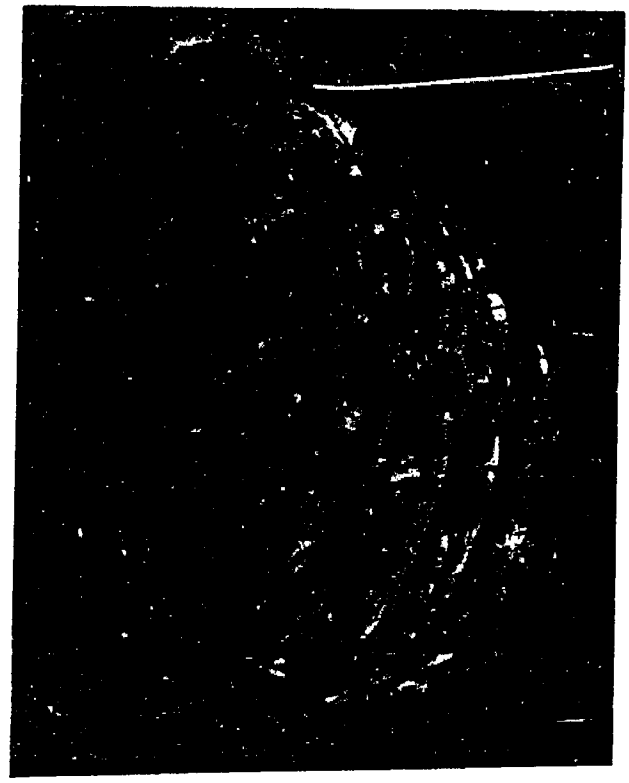

Fig. 40. Étude (1894, Photo: International Studio (August 1900), p. 70.)

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Fig. 41. Panneau (In the Orchard) (1894, AAIAL)

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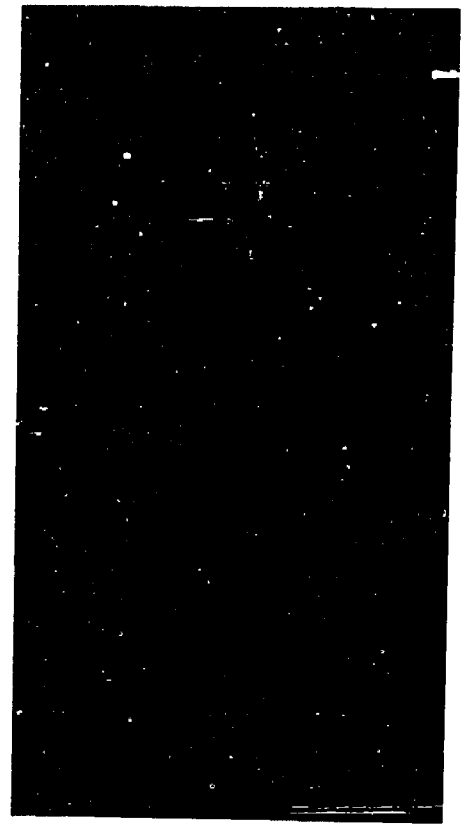

Fig. 42. Devant la glace (1894, Photo: International Studio (August 1900), p. 71.)

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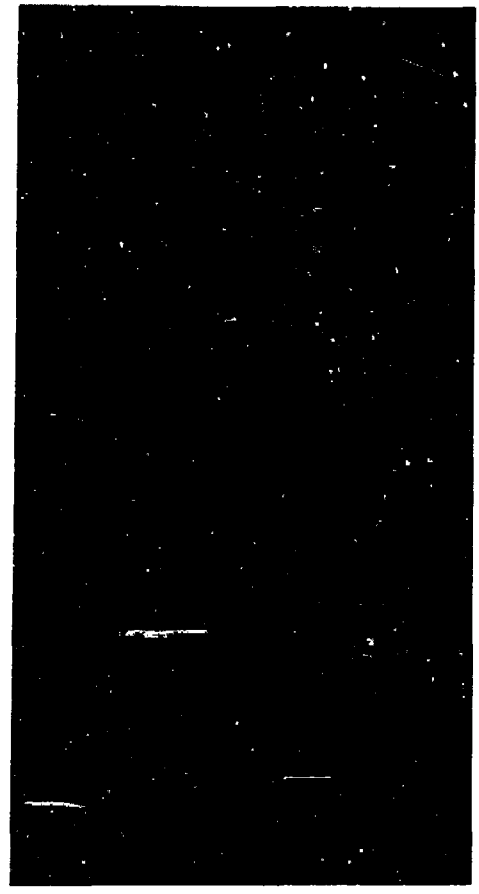

Fig. 43. Fancy Dress (c. 1894-1895, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Fin-de-Siecle American (1980), p. 25.

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Fig. 44. Reflection (c. 1894-1895, Photo: Woman's Art Journal (Fall 1985/Winter 1986), p. 4.)

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Fig. 45. Loie Fuller au repos (1895, Photo: La Lanterne (1895), p. 4.

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Fig. 46. Étude (1896, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Fin-de-Siècle American (1980), p. 29.

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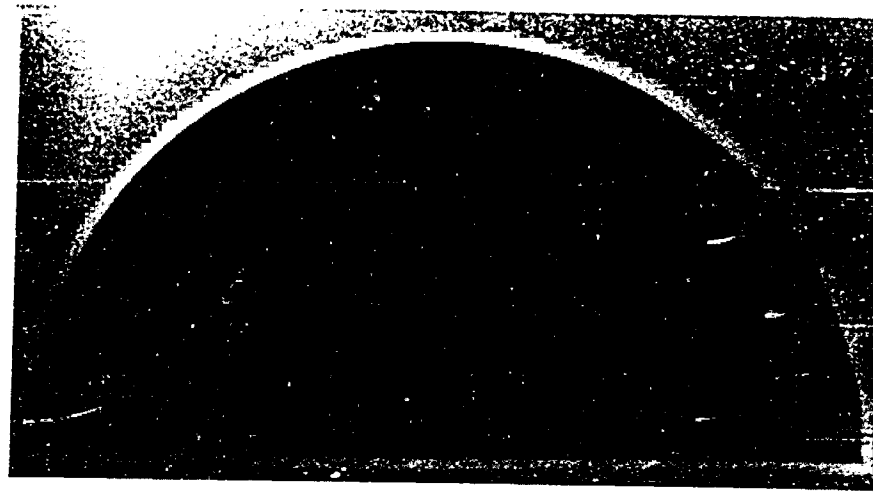

Fig. 47. The Cairn (1896, LoC)

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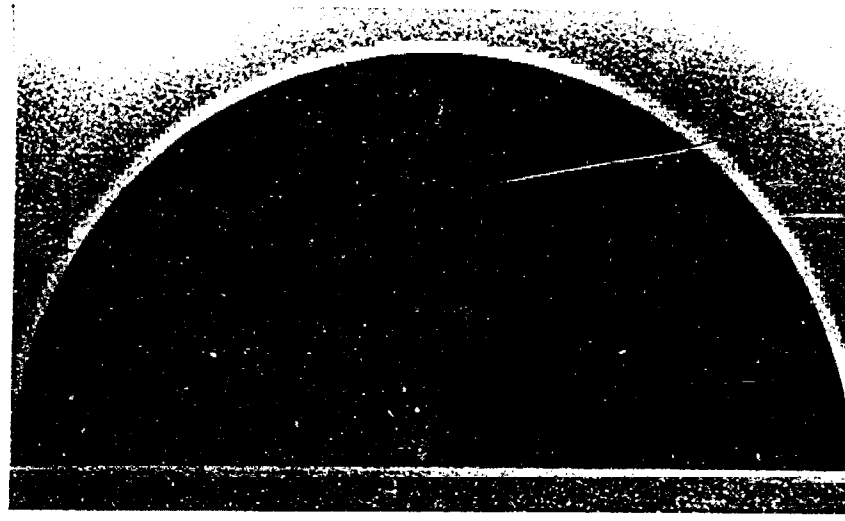

Fig. 48. Oral Tradition (1896, LoC)

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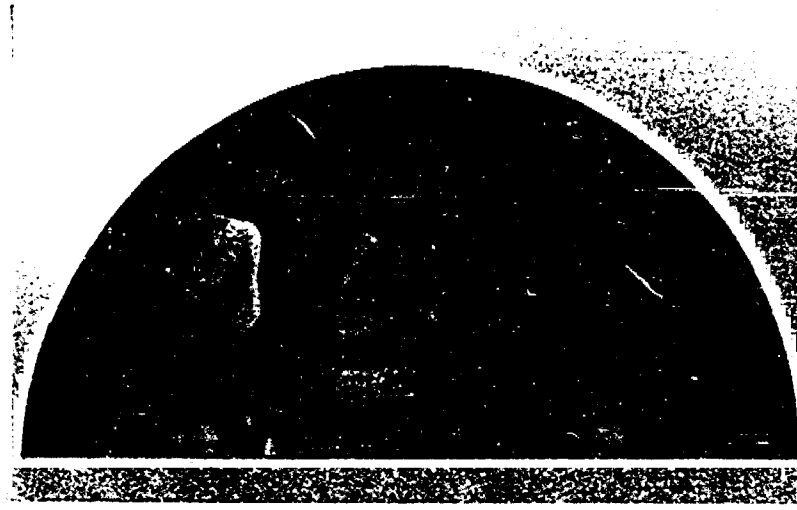

Fig. 49. Egyptian Hieroglyphics (1896, LoC)

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Fig. 50. Picture Writing (1896, LoC)

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Fig. 51. Manuscript Book (1896, LoC)

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Fig. 52. The Printing Press (1896, LoC)

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Fig. 53. The Mirror (1896, Photo: Harper's Weekly (November 1896), p. 1120.

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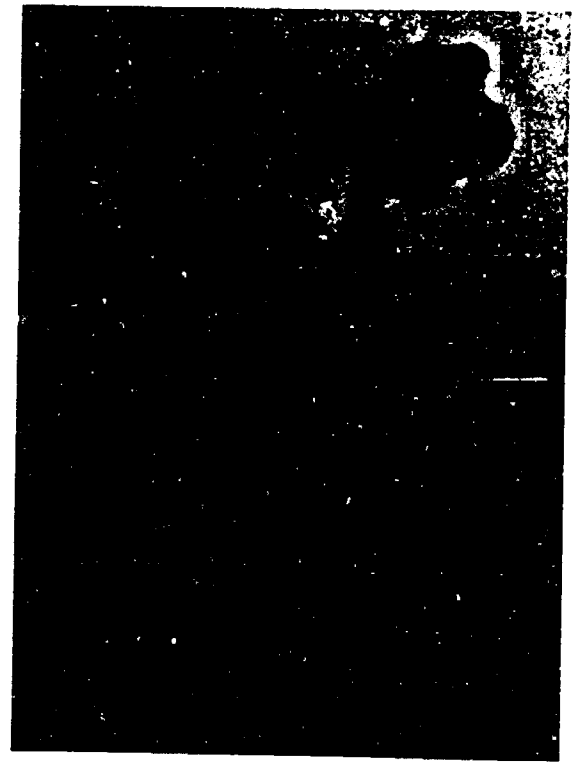

Fig. 54. Peonies (1896, Photo: International Studio (August 1900), p. 75.)

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Fig. 55. The Bronze Bowl (c. 1895, Photo: Grand Central Art Galleries, La Femme: The Influence of Whistler and Japanese Prints on American Art (1983), p. 5.

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Fig. 56. Étude (The Reader) (1896, Photo: International Studio (August 1900), p. 72.)

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Fig. 57. Isabella and the Pot of Basil (1897, MFAB)

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Fig. 58. Map 1898 Salon (1898, Photo: Le Gaulois (April 1898), p. 6.

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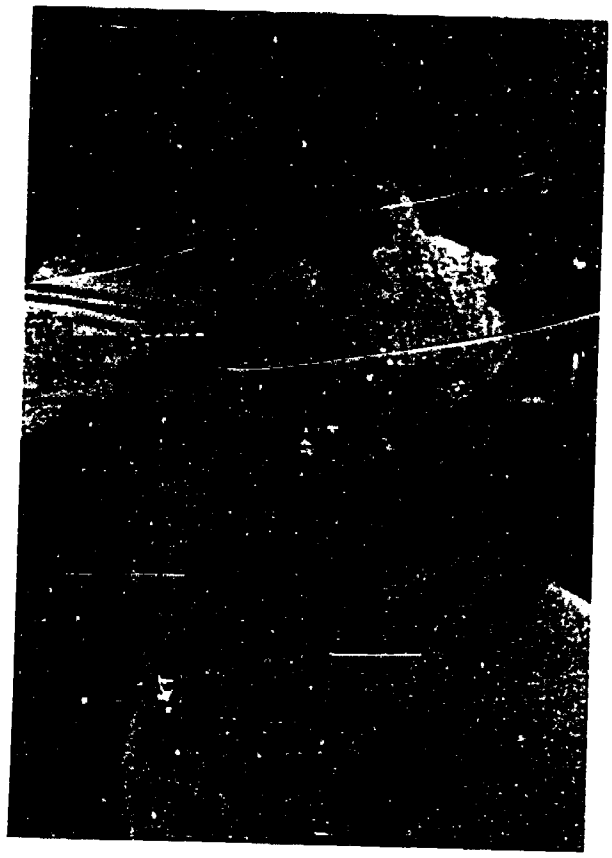

Fig. 59. Portrait (c. 1898, Photo: Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Exposition de 1898. Catalogue Illustré (1898), p. 185.

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Fig. 60. Portrait (1898, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5697.)

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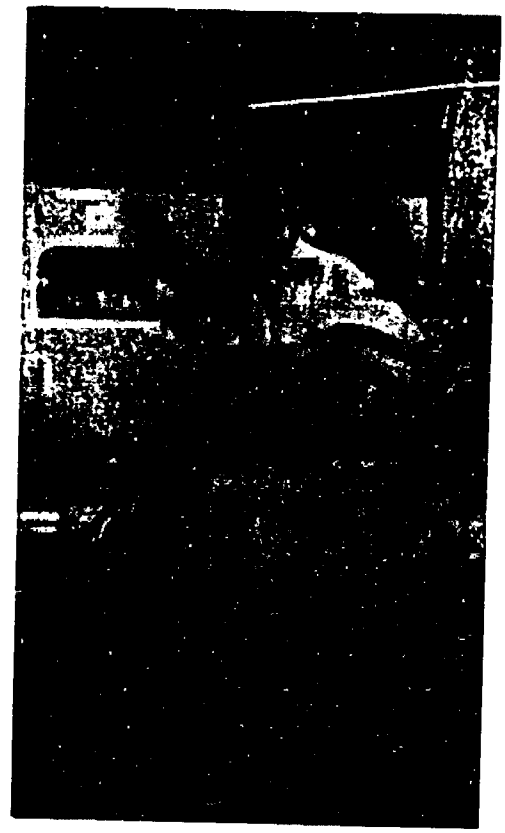

Fig. 61. Pandore (1898, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5685.)

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Fig. 62. The Blue Bowl (1898, RISD)

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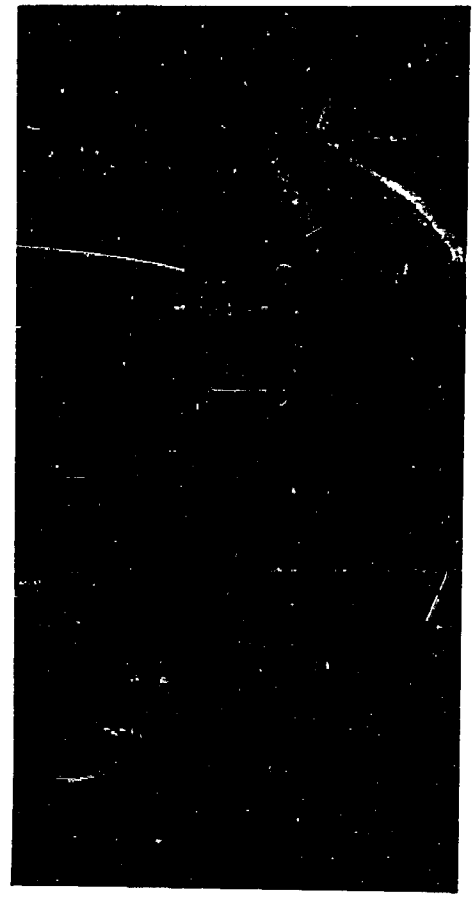

Fig. 63. The Green Bow (1898, Jordan-Volpe Gallery, New York)

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Fig. 64. The Glass Bowl (c. 1898, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Correspondences (1985), p. 12.

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Fig. 65. The Green Girl (1898, Photo: International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, Exhibition of International Art (1898), p. 276.

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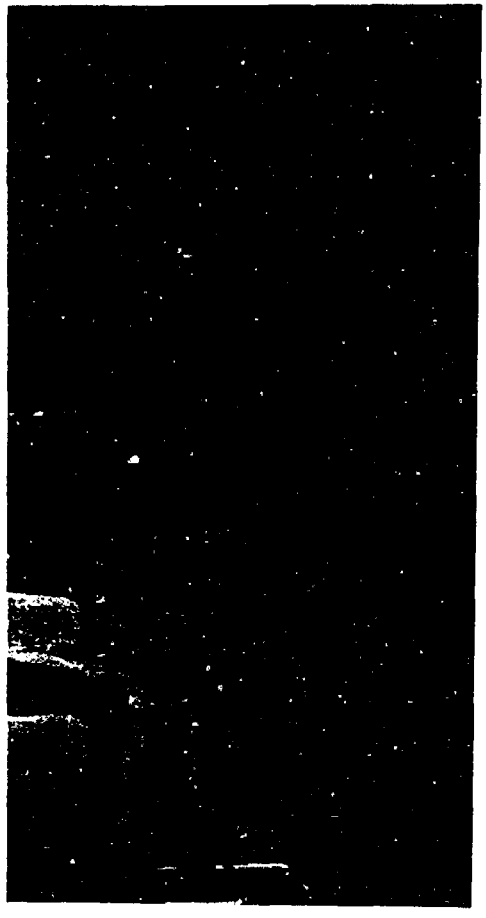

Fig. 66. The Café (1898, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Fin-de-Siècle American (1980), p. 32.

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Fig. 67. The Ray of Sunlight (1898, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Correspondences (1985), p. 11.)

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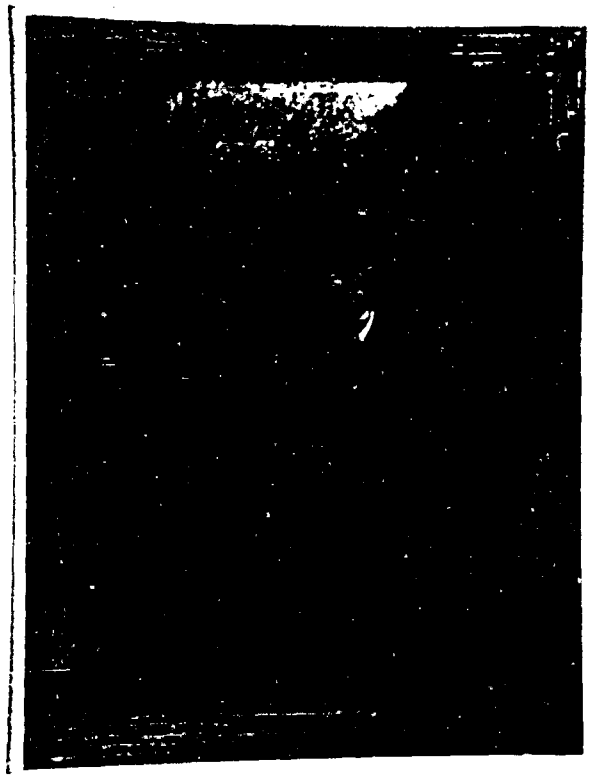

Fig. 68. Portrait of Rodin (1899, Art Collection, First National Bank of Chicago)

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Fig. 69. Autumn (1900, Photo: Buffalo Courier (April 1901), n. pag.

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Fig. 70. La mere (c. 1899-1900, Photo: The House Beautiful (January 1904), p. 70.)

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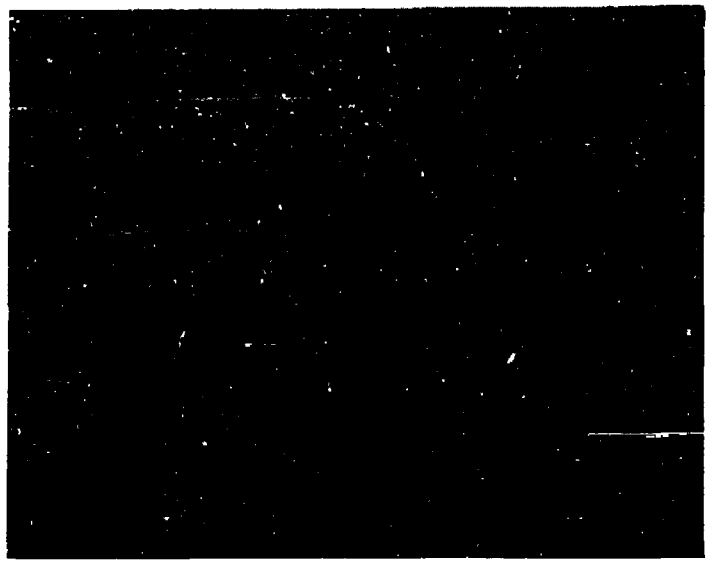

Fig. 71. Marine (1900, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Correspondences (1985), p. 13.

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Fig. 72. Fleurs (Peonies) (1899, Photo: Graham Gallery, John White Alexander, 1856-1915: Correspondences (1985), cover.)

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Fig. 73. John Cowan (1900, Photo: John James Cowan, From 1846 to 1932 (1933), p. 112.)

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Fig. 74. Self-Portrait (c. 1901-1902, NAD)

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Fig. 75. Edwin Austin Abbey (c. 1901-1902, NAD)

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Fig. 76. Miss Dorothy Roosevelt (1901-1902, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5692.)

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Fig. 77. Mrs. Ledyard Blair (1901, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5690.)

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Fig. 78. Mrs. Herman Duryea (c. 1902, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5695.)

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Fig. 79. Mrs. Thomas Hastings (c. 1901-1902, NAD)

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Fig. 80. A Woman in Rose (c. 1900-1901, CMA)

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Fig. 81. Portrait of Mrs. John W. Alexander (c. 1902, LACMA)

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Fig. 82. James W. Alexander (c. 1898, Photo: The Critic (July-August 1898), p. 8.)

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Fig. 83. A Rose (c. 1901-1902, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5691.)

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Fig. 84. The Rose (c. 1901, Photo: International Studio (December 1901), p. xlvii.)

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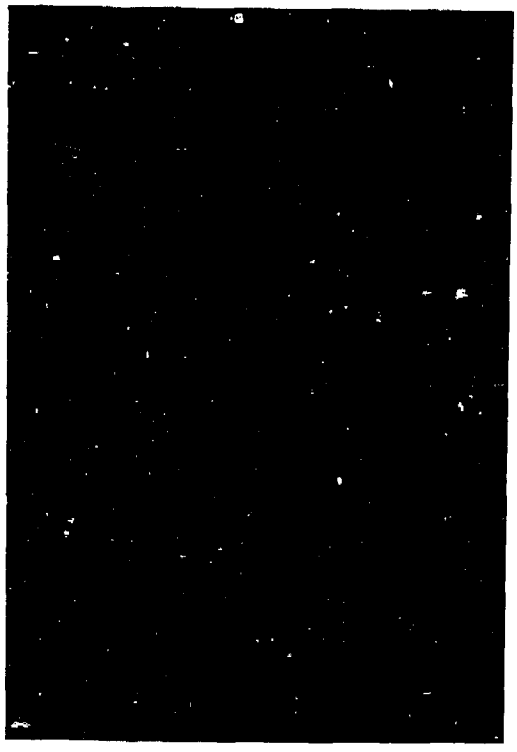

Fig. 85. A Study in Green (c. 1901-1902, Photo: Harper's New Monthly Magazine (July 1906), p. 183.)

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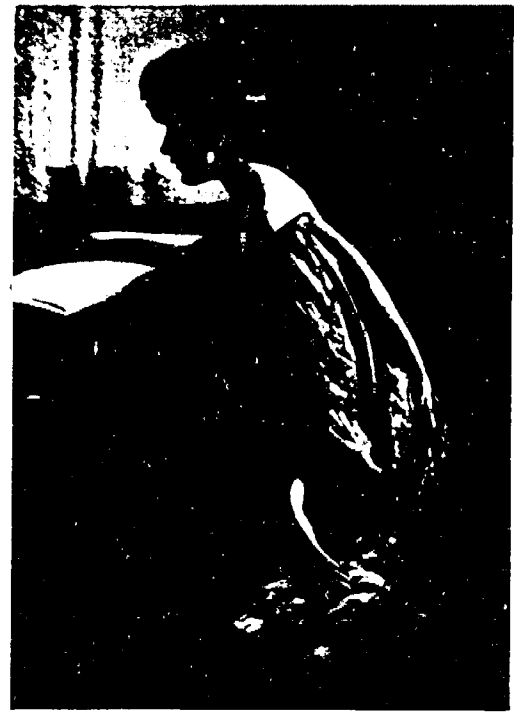

Fig. 86. A Quiet Hour (c. 1901-1902, PAFA)

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Fig. 87. A Favorite Corner (c. 1901-1902, Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina)

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Fig. 88. Memories (1903, TBM)

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Fig. 89. The Butterfly (1904, Jordan-Volpe Gallery, New York)

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Fig. 90. The Mother (1904, AAIAL)

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Fig. 91. Aurora Leigh (1904, CMA)

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Fig. 92. Study in Black and Green (c. 1905-1906, MMA)

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Fig. 93. Mrs. Wheaton (1904, Photo: World's Work (January 1905), p. 5698.)

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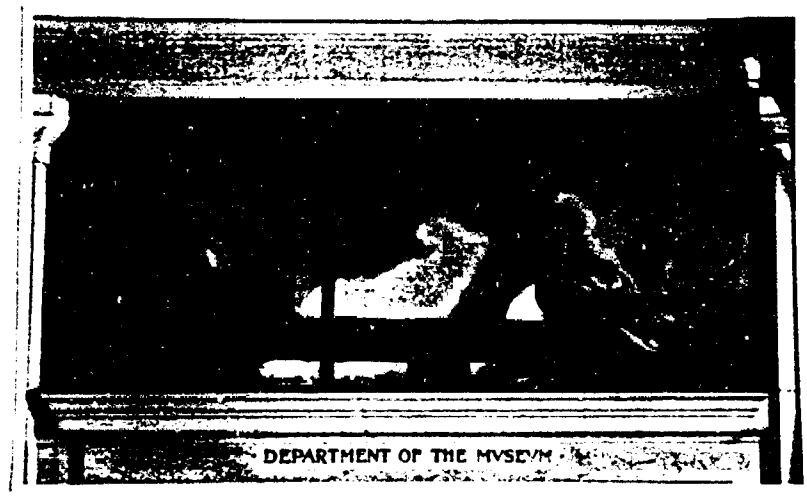

Fig. 94. The Crowning of Labor (detail first floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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Fig. 95. The Crowning of Labor, The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh (detail second floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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Fig. 96. The Crowning of Labor, The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh (detail second floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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Fig. 97. The Crowning of Labor, The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh (detail second floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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Fig. 98. The Crowning of Labor, The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh (detail second floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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Fig. 99. The Crowning of Labor (detail second floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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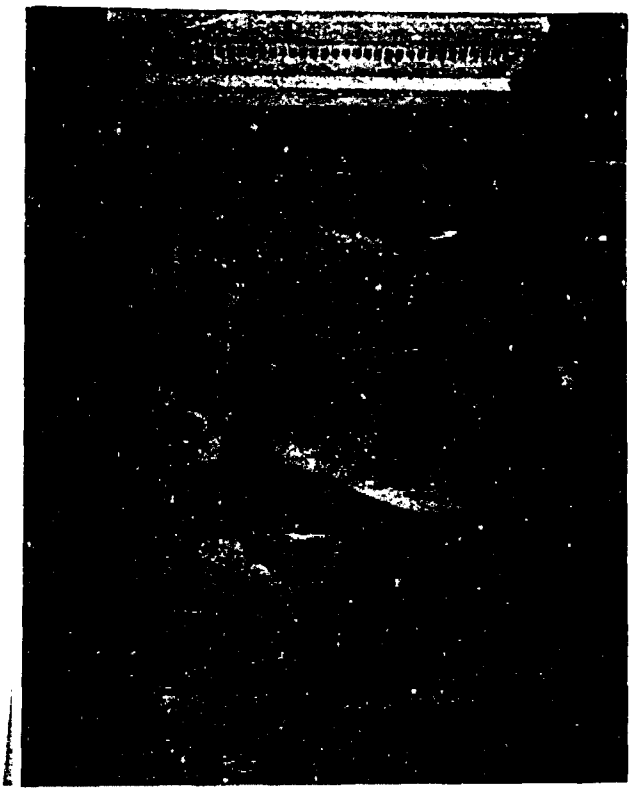

Fig. 100. The Crowning of Labor (detail second floor), (1905-1908, CI)

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Fig. 101. Worthington Whittredge (1907, Photo: The Outlook (May 1910), p. 174.)

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Fig. 102. William Bunker (c. 1905, NYHS)

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Fig. 103. Booth Tarkington (c. 1906-1907, NPG)

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Fig. 104. Phyllis (1909, Sheldon Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute, Indiana)

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Fig. 105. Mrs. Mackey (c. 1905, Photo: Wilson's Photographic Magazine (May 1910), p. 216.)

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Fig. 106. Summer's Day (1909, Photo: Academy Notes (January 1910), p. 28.)

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Fig. 107. The Tenth Muse (1909, Graham Gallery, New York)

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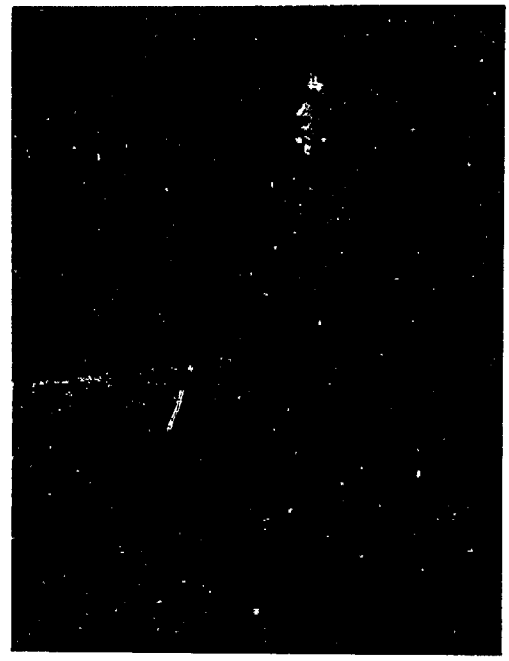

Fig. 108. Miss Helen Beatty (1909, Photo: Catalogue of the 13 Annual Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (1909), n. pag.

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Fig. 109. Mrs. J. Borden Harriman (c. 1908, Photo: Cosmopolitan Magazine (October 1909), p. 562.)

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Fig. 110. Sunlight (1909, AIC)

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Fig. 111. At the Window (c. 1911)

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Fig. 112. The Ring (1911, MMA)

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Fig. 113. Portrait (c. 1912)

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Fig. 114. Miss Maude Adams (c. 1911-1912, Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, Utah)

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Fig. 115. The Gossip (1912, PMA)

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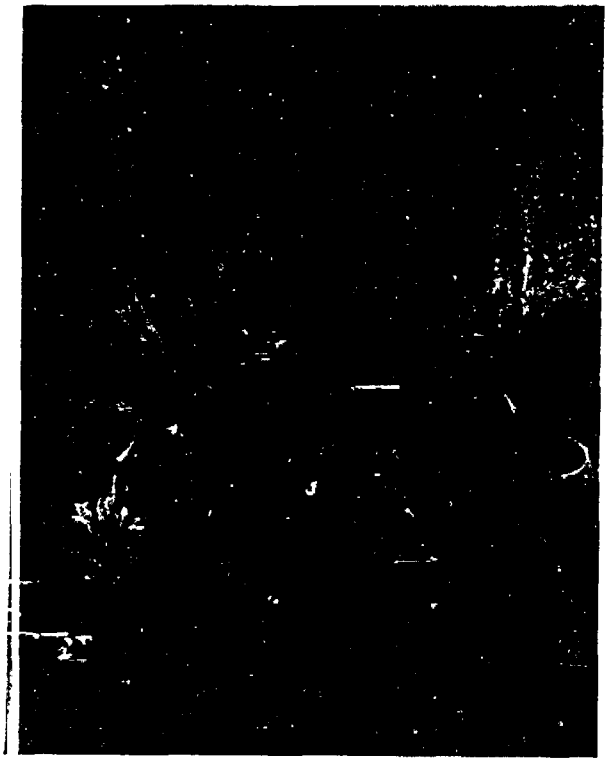

Fig. 116. A Meadow Flower (c. 1912, Photo: J. Walker McSpadden, Famous Painters of America (1916), facing p. 368.)

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Fig. 117. June (c. 1913-1914, NMAA)

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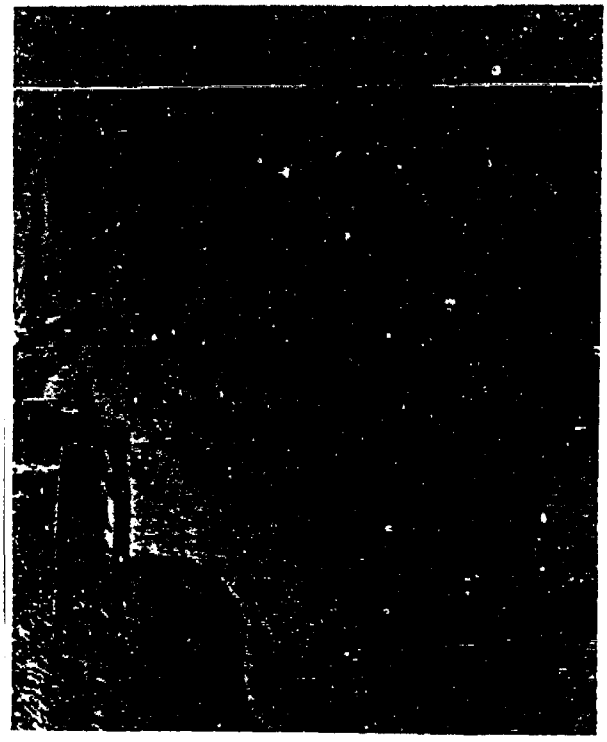

Fig. 118. Her Birthday (c. 1913-1914, Photo: American Magazine of Art (July 1916), p. 371.

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