



*The Old Road to Deering* by Chauncey Foster Ryder

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: ***American Impressionism: The Lure of the Artists' Colony***  
Where: International Museum of Art & Science, 1900 Nolana  
When: Through Nov. 12, 2017  
Hours: 9am-3pm Tues-Wed, 9am-8pm Thurs, 9am-5pm Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun  
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### **American Impressionist Art Colonies**

BY NANCY MOYER  
SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

This exhibit presents works by artists who formed the backbone of American art.

Many of us lack familiarity with American Impressionism, so this exhibit is a real treat. America produced some important Impressionists, but were overshadowed by the French. Art styles have often originated in one place and successfully spread elsewhere; this was the case of the American Impressionists. A stellar group of acclaimed painters who influenced the development of American art, their reputations faded with the advent of the Modern movements. The art world is a fickle partner. This new exhibit at IMAS, *American Impressionism: The Lure of the Artists' Colony*, brings them back into our field of vision, focusing on selected works produced during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The exhibit is arranged according to artist colonies that played a critical role beginning in the 1870s.

As the industrial revolution spread, American artists and craftsmen felt a need to return to nature; Impressionism's plein air landscape painting aesthetic filled that need. Art colonies formed in small towns that provided affordable living, abundant scenery for painting, and relatively easy access to large cities where artists could sell their work. Colonies represented in this exhibit include Cos Cob and Old Lyme in Connecticut; Cape Cod, Cape Ann, and Rockport in Massachusetts; New Hope and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Taos in New Mexico. Here, loosely affiliated groups of artists sharing a common aesthetic vision lived and worked together. Before the invention of

collapsible paint tubes artists were often confined to painting studio subjects or painting by dogma. With the invention of paint tubes in 1841, artists could leave their studio where they had painted from memory and formula, and easily paint directly from nature. Impressionists used pure color straight from the tubes, making their works more vibrant.

A good Impressionist painting feels like a nostalgic memory. Although painted on site, the capture of fleeting light was done quickly and the impression of the person or place appears remembered, without much detail. This exhibit shows the tendency toward asymmetrical composition, cropped figures, and plunging perspectives. In his painting, "The Old Road to Deering", Chauncey Foster Ryder conveys the effect of natural light on his subject along with choppy, broken brushstrokes. Drawn to landscapes like their European counterparts, Americans had differing political tendencies. European impressionists favored tranquil landscapes or views of lower and emerging middle class life; American Impressionists agreed with the tranquil landscapes, but they preferred scenes showing off America's economic prowess and those that depicted the upper class - as in "Portrait of a Young Woman" by Augustus Vincent Tack.

The wide range of paintings in this exhibit demonstrates the reluctance for some artists to break from Realism, contrasting with artists who embraced the pure Impressionist concept. The sensitivity in Henry Ward Ranger's oil painting, "Marine-Green and Gold", is an ethereal impressionistic experience of the morning sky at sea. With quick brush strokes swooping across the canvas, it is light itself. Ranger founded the Old Lyme colony in 1899 and was called the dean of American landscape by the New York Times.

This is a rich exhibit that includes works by Childe Hassam, William Merritt Chase, and Mary Cassatt, the single ex-patriot American Impressionist in the collection. This style is still the most popular with the public, and *American Impressionism: The Lure of the Artists' Colony* offers an excellent introduction into America's involvement. It is on loan from the collection of the Reading Public Museum, Reading Pennsylvania.

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