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*Virgin Landscapes, Native Cultures:
The Artist-Explorer in North America*

Sordoni Art Gallery
Wilkes University



*Virgin Landscapes, Native Cultures:
The Artist-Explorer in North America*

*An exhibition organized by the Sordoni Art Gallery,
Wilkes University, in recognition of the
Quincentenary of the voyage of Columbus
Dr. William H. Sterling, Guest Curator*

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How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

This was the response of Chief Sealath of the Duamish Tribe to President Franklin Pierce's inquiry of 1854 regarding the purchase of a large tract of Indian land. Obviously, the two men had vastly different concepts of man's relationship to his environment. *Virgin Landscapes, Native Cultures* is about the encounter between two continents and the inhabitants of each, although admittedly through Anglo-European eyes — the artists represented here were Westerners who recorded as faithfully as they could the "native cultures" and "virgin landscapes" they encountered in North America.

Planning for this exhibition began several years ago, although the original concept has gone through several permutations since then, and our small staff has worked diligently to bring it into being. We are grateful to Dr. William H. Sterling, Associate Professor of Art at Wilkes University, who served as the exhibition's curator, providing a selection of objects and an essay which are both enlightening and sensitive to the subject. His careful research is revealed in the following text which, refreshingly, manages to be both lively and scholarly.

We are indebted to those listed on the title page who provided support and others including Andrew J. Sordoni, III; Val and Gus Genetti; the Cultural Events Committee, Wilkes University under the chairmanship of Robert Heaman; and anonymous friends.

The gallery staff, new to a project of this ambition, tackled their responsibilities with diligence, professionalism, and, when needed, good humor. Nancy L. Krueger handled all the correspondence with lenders and coordinated all the varied details that go into assembling an exhibition and catalog of this scope. Kathy L. Scott lent her expert typing skills to the transformation of the manuscript from pen to computer printout. I am grateful to both of them for taking the exhibition's concept and making it a reality.

Annie Bohlin approached the design of this publication with her usual intellectual curiosity and created a perceptive and appropriate document to accompany and survive the exhibition.

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Finally, as always, we thank the institutions and private lenders listed in this catalog whose generosity made this exhibition possible.

Judith Hansen O'Toole
 Director



Hariot, Thomas
Admiranda narratio fida tamen, Frankfurt, 1590
 Illustrated by John White
Indian Fishing Scene
 Theodore de Bry, engraver
 Photo courtesy of Library Company of Philadelphia

THE ARTIST-EXPLORER IN NORTH AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition surveys the era during which the pictorial exploration of North America evolved from the reportorial to the expressive. It was also an era which saw other momentous developments: the transcontinental settlement by Euroamericans and the attendant uprooting of the native cultures; the creation of a national sense of destiny and history; and the emergence of a cultivated indigenous art community.

The artist was never the point man in any campaign of geographical exploration. He recorded mostly what others had already discovered. Nevertheless, the term "artist-explorer" is useful as an indication of the difference between those artists who worked at home, using only their imaginations or the reports of travelers, and those artists who followed the pathfinders into the field to bring back eye-witness images.

Some of the artists and themes appearing in this exhibition, particularly those of the American West and the American Indians, have been featured in many other recent exhibitions. These themes naturally occur in the current project, because they overlap so broadly our primary subject of the artist-explorer in North America. If your favorite western painter is missing in this show, keep in mind that many portrayals of the West were by the stay-at-homes, and many more were the work of artists whose travels came after those of the vanguard. In this exhibition, we are focusing on artists who, driven by a quest for fame or fortune, inspiration or knowledge, undertook arduous, and often dangerous, journeys into uncharted terrain.

In 1494, Albrecht Dürer, the great German artist of the Renaissance, crossed the Alps to visit Italy. This trip had nothing of the magnitude and risk which marked Columbus's first voyage across the Atlantic. Still, in those days, Dürer's journey was a challenging venture. His motives were not altogether different from Columbus's. Both men believed that their trips could bring them fame and fortune, as well as enlightenment. The wonders and wealth of the East beckoned Columbus. The art of antiquity and the Renaissance lured Dürer. Both the navigator and the artist hoped to return with treasures. For Dürer, that meant a deeper understanding of classical style and the newer discoveries by Italian artists.

Dürer thus helped to establish a tradition which remained the primary object of artists' physical explorations well into the nineteenth century. Any similarity between their travels and those made by explorers of sea and land were mostly metaphorical. Indeed, prior to the nineteenth century, artists were not particularly interested in new lands or exotic peoples. Representations of Blacks and Asians by European artists, for example, were few and far between. Art was intensely Eurocentric in both style and subject matter. The Christian religion, classical mythology, history and portraiture dominated subject matter. Genre, landscape, and still-life, as independent categories, began to flourish only in the seventeenth century and remained firmly devoted to familiar and near-at-hand images for two hundred years. Eventually, these lower ranking categories in the hierarchy of artistic subject matter would become the backbone of both objective naturalism and subjective expressionism, exemplified in the nineteenth century by the Realist and Romantic movements.

Until a demand for that kind of art developed, however, there was no reason for an artist to travel off to some faraway wilderness or aboriginal community. Even as philosophers and historians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries began to posit connections, both literal and figurative, between the New World and ancient and biblical history, few artists (or their patrons) evidently found such speculations compelling. In fact, Dürer's example has shown that the artist's first concern was the tradition of art itself. An American wilderness, or its inhabitant, was a less powerful stimulus than an old master landscape or an antique statue. Art tended to perpetuate an ideal world.

A second incident involving Dürer seems to confirm this interpretation. In 1520, he had occasion to visit the Emperor's art collection. Among the newest acquisitions was a hoard of Mexican Indian artifacts. Dürer writes in his diary that he was overwhelmed by these "wondrous... [and] wonderful works of art." Yet, so far as we know, he didn't sketch them or describe them in any detail. As marvelous as he found them to be, they must have been curiosities which did not fit into his artistic world.

Artists became explorers, in the geographical sense, only when art itself began to embrace the real world in all its diversity. Somewhere between the categories of art and curiosity, there began to flourish, in the Renaissance, a body of natural history illustration (i.e., careful studies of flora, fauna, and geology) requiring the skills, if not the imagination, of an artist. Some very significant artists took part in this development, most notably Leonardo da Vinci, whose field trip to the Alps made him a forerunner of the artist-explorer.

The New World offered naturalists a wealth of new species to examine and record. At first, most of the natural history illustrators remained in Europe and worked from imported specimens. In the late sixteenth century, naturalists and colonizers of the new territories began to take along artists to make both naturalistic and idealized portrayals of sites ripe for settlement. Some of the earliest scenes of America were, in a sense, real estate promotions. Hovering over all these pragmatic programs of exploration and representation, however, were the more subjective concerns of moral philosophy: where did America belong in the greater scheme of things; what aesthetic value did its wilderness have; were its natives subhuman or civilized? Artists, like their patrons, would work such concerns into their interpretations, consciously and unconsciously, over the next three centuries.

One must also remember that ocean and wilderness travel before the age of mechanized and comfortable transportation was full of hardship, not to mention risk to life and limb. As a class, professional artists tended to be as ill-disposed to arduous travel as they were to military service. Check the household list of "great" European artists, and you will find that, before the nineteenth century, virtually none of them ever left their home continent. Only with the rise of Romanticism and the wanderlust it engendered did a significant number of artists begin, physically, to seek inspiration in faraway places or alien cultures. Romanticism made the artist into a hero of culture, whose personal odyssey could take place within the imagination or atop a real mountain. With this kind of encouragement, artistic exploration of both kinds came into its own in the nineteenth century.

DISCOVERING AMERICA (1492-1800)

No artist accompanied Columbus on his voyages to America, and no professional artists that we know of sailed to these shores much before the seventeenth century. The earliest visual representations of the New World by the Old were based either on descriptions brought back by explorers or on pure fantasy. Virtually all such representations were the work of obscure illustrators. America was not a subject of much interest to artists. The continent had come within Europe's purview accidentally and was regarded mostly as a geographical impediment and a philosophical inconvenience.

The earliest images of America, appearing in 1493 to preface tracts on Columbus's maiden voyage, are wholly imaginary generic landscapes. In 1505, the Master of Viseu, an anonymous Portuguese painter, portrayed an American Indian in the role of one of the magi in an *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece (Viseu Museu, Portugal). The American replaced the more conventional black African here as a representative of remote peoples in the trio of magi. Had the Master of Viseu been to the New World? No one knows, but his Indian seems to be based more upon descriptions than direct encounter. Only his deep bronze complexion and feathered headdress identify him as a native American (these features became standard symbols of the Indian in European art for the next three centuries). Even when Indians were brought to Europe, it is doubtful that many artists had an opportunity to see them in the flesh.

Symbolic images were adequate for the kinds of scenes in which America usually appeared, such as the cosmological allegories so popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An Indian, a parrot, or a palm tree inserted into a conventional European landscape was enough to signal the New World. Authenticity in visual representation was far less critical in the sixteenth century than it was in the nineteenth. The European landscape, itself, was seldom portrayed with topographical accuracy in the Renaissance. In the 1540s, when the Dutch artist Jan Mostaert painted *West Indian Scene* (Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem), probably no one was upset that the whole thing was entirely imaginary. More extraordinary is the fact that Mostaert was perhaps the only noteworthy sixteenth century artist to portray an extensive American scene at all.

The meager excitement generated in artists and their patrons by the New World, as a subject for art, was apparently widespread. Even when artists began to make the journey themselves, what they reported seems not to have inspired many others to follow. It was a rough and hostile environment. Painting as "travelogue" only became popular in the eighteenth century, when tourism began to flourish. By that time, well-traveled patrons were less inclined to accept surrogates for their favorite scenes.

The earliest extensive visual reports of America done on site did not appear until Jacques Le Moyne visited Florida in 1564 and John White settled in Virginia in 1585. Both men were trained cartographers and skilled draftsmen, and both had been sent out on royal commissions to promote colonization. Le Moyne accompanied René de Laudonnière's expedition, while White traveled with Sir Walter Raleigh to become the governor of the ill-fated Roanoke colony. The drawings and paintings produced by Le Moyne and White presented for the first time a straightforward and detailed picture of Indian life. Although conventional artistic devices such

as classical poses crept in, these portrayals seem to be largely accurate. A few years later, both sets of images were adapted for a series of books on the New World by the Frankfurt engraver and publisher, Theodor de Bry. (Except for one painting, Le Moyne's work survives only in these engravings; White's original pictures are in the British Museum).

Comparable pictorial studies of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies to the south had not yet been done, despite the fact that American exploration began in those latitudes. The reasons for this are not clear. Perhaps Spain's somewhat secretive posture concerning her gold-bearing territories discouraged publicity. The English and the French, in contrast, were eager to stimulate colonization in the North. The book illustrated with White's pictures described Virginia as a "pastoral paradise" (Thomas Hariot, *Brief and True report of the new found land of Virginia*, 1590). If White's images fall short of accuracy in any significant way, it would be that they accentuate the positive. His purpose, after all, was to attract immigrants.

The most accomplished artists in America before the late eighteenth century were a pair of Dutchmen, Frans Post and Albert Eckhout. They did go to the south, but not to the Iberian-controlled territories, and their purpose was less promotional than scientific. Post and Eckhout had been hired, in 1638, by Count Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen, governor of the Dutch colony in Brazil, to record the natural history of the region. Post painted numerous landscapes in the spacious Baroque naturalism prevailing in the Dutch school at that time. Eckhout concentrated on the native peoples, producing a series of life-sized, full-length portraits of unprecedented authenticity, only faintly glamorized by their Van Dykian compositions. He captured, with equanimity, both their innocence and their cannibalistic habits. Count Maurits was rather ahead of his time in bringing artists along on his expedition to record this material in its natural setting. (Eckhout's paintings belong to the Royal Danish Museum, Copenhagen; one of Post's Brazilian landscapes may be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York).

As settlement increased in America, artists found more traditional reasons to undertake the journey themselves. Established colonial towns created a demand for portraits, altarpieces, and interior decorations. The artists who came to meet this demand were not explorers in any sense; they were cultural emissaries, bringing an element of Old World refinement to settled communities. The first professional European artist to emigrate to North America was probably the Swedish portraitist, Gustavus Hesselius, who settled in Delaware in 1711 and later established himself in Philadelphia. Hesselius, and others like him, set a standard for native-born colonial artists, but the colonies were still the boondocks as far as cultivated Europeans were concerned. None of the great names in art history boarded a transatlantic ship until several generations after Hesselius. The first was Jean-Antoine Houdon, who came over for a brief visit in 1785 to sculpt Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and several other luminaries. About a century later, another great Frenchman, Edgar Degas, traveled to New Orleans to visit his American-born mother's relatives. A few portraits and local genre scenes resulted from this trip. Maternal connections attracted Degas' equally great countryman, Paul Gauguin, just a few years later. Gauguin's mother was a native of America in the fullest sense, having descended from Incas. He came seeking a deeper connection with his exotic heritage, perhaps, but his stay, in Martinique, was brief. His final, deliberate escape from the confinements of European culture took him to the established French colony of Tahiti, which, by that time, was already on the South Seas tourist circuit. As a young child and long before he became an artist, Gauguin had lived in Peru for four years, an experience that unquestionably influenced his artistic personality but almost never showed up in his subject matter. The only other famous European artist to join this short roster of pre-twentieth century visitors was Camille Pissarro. Pissarro was actually born in America (1830), to French parents on the island of St. Thomas. In his early twenties, he migrated to Paris, where he remained for the rest of his long life. None of these illustrious men could be considered explorers of the type we are concerned with here.

At the level of high culture, Europe's condescending attitude toward America as a raw, insalubrious, and uncouth place had persisted into the nineteenth century. What is more, the American landscape was said to be less interesting than Europe's own. That was due partly to



Bry, Theodor de
[America] Frankfurt, 1590
Part II, Plate 31

Illustrated by Jacques LeMoyne
Enemy Town Burnt in a Night Raid

Photo courtesy of Rare Books and Manuscripts Division,
New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation

the fact that it was a landscape "lacking history," notwithstanding the presence of a native civilization. Even the Europeans' fascination with the exotica of Indians and the "Wild West" amounted to a kind of vicarious thrill-seeking, amply fulfilled by novels, fanciful illustrations, and touring troupes (Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was a sellout everywhere it went).

Indian society was seen as prehistoric and inscrutable. From the earliest days of exploration, the Indians drew ambivalent responses from Europeans. Two stereotypes came to prevail: the primitive savage, without law or religion (Hobbes's brute); and the noble innocent, uncorrupted by luxury (Rousseau's "natural man"). One dwelt in a hostile wilderness; the other, in a gentle Arcadia. In art, Indians of either stereotype tended to be represented with the ideal postures and proportions of classical figures. This isn't particularly surprising, since classical



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idealism was still the rule in figurative art between the fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, this classical treatment was strikingly substantiated by the fact that many Indians encountered by the Europeans were, indeed, impressive physical specimens with strong brows, aquiline noses, dignified bearing - and, like the great antique statues, often nude.

Among the earliest paintings of Indians in this exhibition - the small watercolor sketches by George Heriot (cat. nos. 20, 21), dating between 1799 and 1804 - conform to this tradition. Heriot was a British official who traveled through eastern Canada in preparation for his duties as postmaster-general of the colony. Although he was not a professional artist, he had studied with the noted English draftsman and watercolorist Paul Sandby, and had obviously absorbed the artistic fashions of his day. In these two scenes, from a series on Indian ceremonies, Heriot was faithful to native costume and choreography as well as to European composition and figure types. The classical poses and proportions of the Indians, arranged in a frieze across the foreground stage, and the briskly sketched landscape, divided into closed and open spaces, comply with the compositional tradition of Poussin. That Heriot's explorations took place mostly in tamed countryside is suggested by the row of well-dressed colonists in the *Ceremonial Scalp Dance*, observing the reenactment of a presumably obsolete practice.

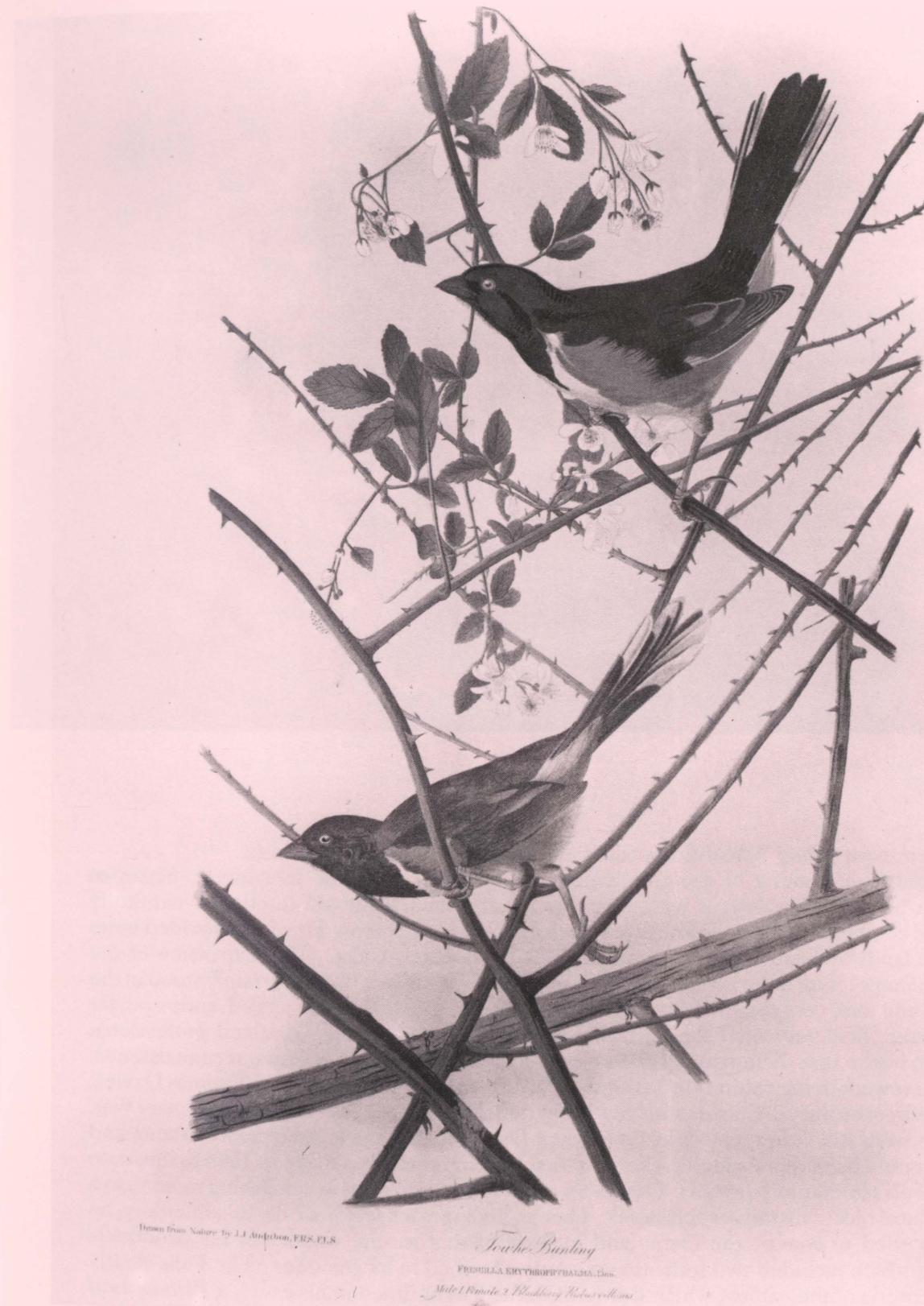
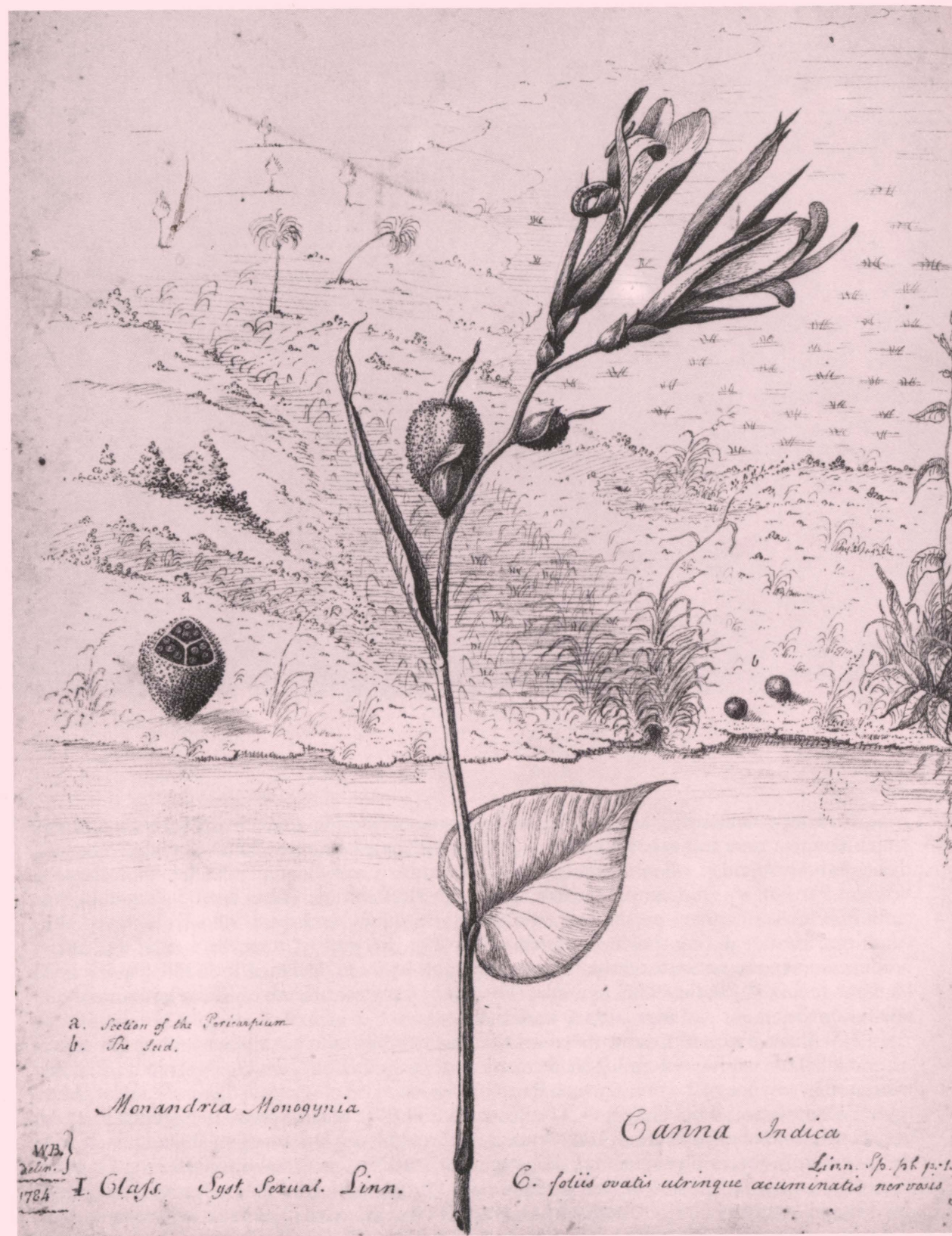
Despite the conventions in Heriot's portrayals of Indian life, they conveyed a suggestion of authenticity rarely seen since John White. Authenticity, as an artistic objective, was still primarily the province of the natural history painters, and we may include Heriot in their ranks,



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as a part-time ethnographer. A small number of other exploring artists in eighteenth century North America were full-time naturalists. The English animal painter, Mark Catesby, traveled through the east and south in the early part of the century, and the native-born botanical artist William Bartram covered similar territory before the Revolution. They were followed in the early nineteenth century by the more famous John James Audubon, who crisscrossed the American frontier during the first four decades. For the most part, these artists, like their predecessors in the naturalist field, maintained a narrow focus, isolating individual species on blank or generically natural backgrounds. Their subjects were effectively detached from their greater environment and from human narrative.

William Bartram is the earliest artist in this exhibition to have been born in America. Almost all of his works conform to the format just described. The *Canna Indica* (cat. no. 2, p. 8) exhibited here is one of the few in which Bartram provided a bit of scenery to give a sense of place to his featured specimen. Simple as it is, this economically drawn expanse of hillside suggests a particular kind of environment, and seems to confirm that the artist set foot there himself and was not merely observing a specimen delivered to his studio. In his travels, Bartram did gather plantings for his father's extensive gardens near Philadelphia (the elder Bartram had been appointed botanist of North America by George III), but his drawings circulated much farther and were admired by English and Continental naturalists. Long after his explorational tours ended, Bartram's book of *Travels* (1791) added narrative interest to his scientific work, and was





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cited by eminent young Romantics, such as Wordsworth and Chateaubriand.

Audubon, coming of age simultaneously with the Romantic movement, began to embellish his naturalist images with a new sense of drama, achieved through dynamically structured compositions and the animated interplay of his specimens. He often provided more extensive landscape settings as well, particularly in the later works. This expansion of the pictorial parameters of naturalist painting was not Audubon's alone, but he certainly stood in the vanguard and took very seriously his role as a Romantic genius (cat. no. 1, p. 9). Landscape, for its own sake, first interested the military. Many army topographers received professional training to insure that their pictorial skills were up to the demands of accurate reconnaissance. The earliest work in the exhibition is *Niagara Falls From Below* (cat. no. 18) by Thomas Davies, a British officer on duty in Canada and New York from the 1760s through the Revolutionary War. The Falls were still rather remote in 1766, when Davies is thought to have painted them, and they had rarely been represented earlier (the first known sketch was made in 1698 to illustrate Father Louis Hennepin's *Travels*). Davies's watercolor impresses us as something more than a topographical record for military purposes. Though his approach was basically documentary, he obviously tried to convey the drama and majesty of this natural wonder in his panoramic rendering which included two Indians apparently absorbed in its grandeur. The Falls clearly met the criteria of the *sublime*, which Edmund Burke had outlined in his essay, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). Any natural phenomenon capable of arousing awe or terror was considered sublime: violent storms, craggy mountains,

great cataracts, vastness of scale, extremes of light and dark, and the like. Late eighteenth century landscapists increasingly embraced this concept. In the last decade of the century, a young Irish writer named Isaac Weld traveled through the United States in order to evaluate the new country's promise for emigration. It failed to live up to his expectations, but he conceded, in his *Travels* (1797), that Niagara was "justly ranked amongst the greatest national curiosities of the known world."

Weld went on to describe his journey through the Blue Ridge Mountains, noting that Thomas Jefferson had proclaimed that the area where the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers cut through was one of the most "stupendous scenes in nature, and worth a voyage across the Atlantic." While agreeing that it was a "wild and romantic" place and "deserving of attention," Weld was far from accepting that it was worth an ocean crossing. "To find numberless scenes more stupendous, it would be needless to go farther than Wales," he concluded. Most of his European contemporaries still shared this sentiment at the turn of the century.



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INTO THE WILDERNESS (1800-1850)

"To the pencil our country affords an inexhaustible abundance, which for picturesque effect, cannot be surpassed in any part of the old world," wrote the Philadelphia artist George Murray in an 1809 issue of *The Port Folio*, perhaps in reaction to the Eurocentrist opinions of travelers like Isaac Weld. When Murray spoke of "picturesque effect," he alluded to a specific aesthetic alternative to the more dramatic sublime. The English aesthetician William Gilpin had recently articulated the picturesque principle (*Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; On Sketching Landscape*, 1791), asserting that wild terrain which was less awesome than the sublime, but more irregular than the formal garden, could produce sensations of beauty and pleasure through interesting variations of pattern and composition. Murray accompanied his article with an engraving of "Buttermilk Falls" in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, a rustic scene clearly of a different order than Niagara Falls.

If America's sublime landscapes were few and far between (the more sublime west was still little known), her picturesque ones were extensive. As Roderick Nash has shown, the early settlers saw the wilderness only as an obstacle or an economic resource, to be consumed or cleared away. Aesthetic attachments developed only as it was tamed and lost, or seen from the vantage point of a comfortable settlement. Ironically, it was the European visitor who first found pleasure in America's wilderness, and most of the early professional landscape painters in America were transplanted Englishmen, such as William and Thomas Birch, Francis Guy, and Joshua Shaw, all of whom arrived between 1790 and 1820. None of these artists could be called explorers, for though many of them traveled extensively, they never penetrated the frontier.

Two important developments in the early nineteenth century stimulated intensified interest in the American landscape and its representation. As the new United States became a magnet for travelers and immigrants, curiosity about the country and its appearance increased markedly. The wilderness, first regarded as a symbol of backwardness by the young nation, began to be seen as an endless resource, something to be trumpeted rather than hidden. The second development was the rise of Romanticism as the most powerful new cultural force in Europe and America. The Romantic spirit embodied ideals of personal freedom and discovery, which were to have a profound influence on society's perception of the landscape. Nature became the mirror of both the transcendent creator and the individual human soul. The landscape, then, offered enlightenment and self-discovery.

From the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century, the significance of landscape had rested upon its historical associations, predominantly those of antiquity or the middle ages. A landscape without history was primitive and, for all intents, artistically unworthy. The early European lack of interest in America's wilderness resided not only in its perceived paucity of sublime sights, but also in its ahistorical rawness. America seemed to have no past, only a present. (Its only ruins, found in Central America, were as cryptic as its native inhabitants.) Barbara Novak has described how this interpretation came to be inverted by Romanticism; "The wilderness, ever new in its virginity, also stretched back into primordial time," she writes. Virgin America's "lack of history" was precisely the beginning of all history, the still-flowering Eden. The association of Nature with the creating Spirit was also a central feature of the Romantic

philosophy of Transcendentalism.

One of the first artists in America to embrace these new ideas was Thomas Cole, a young English immigrant who settled with his parents in Ohio in 1820. Cole has been popularly hailed as the founder of the Hudson River School, as well as American landscape painting in general. Prior to the nineteenth century, most ambitious American-born artists, such as West and Copley, went abroad for study or patronage. Cole may have absorbed something of the English art tradition during his adolescence, but once in America he hardly looked back. Like any country limner, he picked up technical tidbits from local hacks, but his particular talent and sensibility were perfectly fitted for the new Romantic age. To be self-taught was not necessarily a liability from the Romantic point of view. If anything, it might lead to a fresher vision. Cole's vision would be consumed by landscape — landscape picturesque and sublime, real and imagined.

Ohio was no longer a frontier region when Cole arrived, but its scenery contained enough wilderness to flavor his readings of Cooper, Wordsworth, and other Romantic writers. After his move to New York in 1825, the artist encountered more inspiring wildernesses in the still sparsely settled Catskills and Adirondacks. Although not in the frontier, many sections of these mountains were still virgin, and Cole mined from them a repertoire of dramatic motifs which continued to appear in American landscape painting for generations to come (cat. no. 17, p. 48).

Cole's approach to landscape reflected Archibald Alison's views (*Essays of the Nature and Principles of Taste*, 1790), which stressed the psychological association of beauty, imagination, and morality, as well as the more contemporary writings of his friend, William Cullen Bryant, who described paintings of the unspoiled wilderness as "acts of religion." Cole, himself, articulated most ardently the new conception of landscape and America's adequacy to provide its image. In this famous *Essay on American Scenery* (1835), he writes:

"There are those who through ignorance or prejudice strive to maintain that American scenery possesses little that is interesting or truly beautiful — that it is rude without picturesqueness and mountainous without sublimity — that being destitute of those vestiges of antiquity, whose associations so strongly affect the mind, it may not be compared with European scenery....yet the most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wildness....there are those who regret that with the improvements of civilization the sublimity of the wilderness should pass away: for the scene of solitude from which the hand of nature has never been lifted, affect the mind with a more deep toned emotion than aught which the hand of man has touched. Amid them the consequent associations are of God the creator — they are his undefiled works, and the mind is cast into the contemplation of eternal things."

Pure landscape soon gave way in Cole's work to allegorical landscape, reflecting his conviction that the aims of history painting — first in the traditional hierarchy of subject matter — could be met through landscape. His various serial works, such as *The Course of Empire* (1836) and *The Voyage of Life* (1839-40) employed a Romantic infinitude of time and space in landscapes which were increasingly imaginary. Cole's explorations became more cerebral than geographical, but their focus upon the themes of creation and evolution paralleled the more physical explorations of scientists and artist-naturalists.



If the wilderness symbolized God and creation for Romantic poets, it preserved, like an echo, the physical evolution of the world for their scientific contemporaries. Charles Darwin was only eight years younger than Cole, and his vision of Nature was equally unorthodox. However, Darwin, the scientist, replaced symbolism and allegory with evidence and analysis. The artist-explorers of the first half of the nineteenth century tended to be more Darwinian than Colian in spirit. This is not to say that the moral and historical ideas so important to Cole did not touch them, but, on the whole, it was the direct observation of places and people that drove them on.

After the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the government set out to explore and survey its new territory. The Lewis and Clark Expedition and several subsequent expeditions mapped and inventoried part of this vast region, but no artists accompanied these explorations until 1819, when Major Stephen Long was assigned to bring back pictorial as well as written and physical data. Long's party, protected by a complement of soldiers, consisted of naturalists, surveyors, and two artists: Samuel Seymour and Titian Peale. Seymour was to record landscapes and Indians, Peale, the flora and fauna. Seymour, who goes down in history as the first professional artist to depict the Rocky Mountains (cat. no. 32, p. 12), remains a shadowy figure. He was probably an English immigrant whose previous commissions must not have taken him much



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beyond Philadelphia, nor into any prominence. He may have been lured into accepting Major Long's risky low-paying appointment in order to boost a stalled career. Whether he had any deeper motives is unknown.

Titian Ramsay Peale, II, on the other hand, appears to us in vivid detail. Born into an illustrious artistic family, he, at age twenty, already enjoyed a growing reputation as a naturalist. The previous year he had made a field trip to Georgia and Florida, which prepared him for the more demanding journey to the West. Peale was a born explorer, coupling an enthusiasm for adventure with an innate curiosity about the physical world, which latter quality he inherited from his famous father, Charles Willson Peale. On the Long Expedition, he often accompanied the lead parties, hunted buffalo with Indians, and became an expert archer. He returned with more than a hundred drawings and paintings rendered in the field with meticulous care and sensitivity (cat. no. 27, p.15). Many of his specimen subjects appear against landscape backgrounds, as in *Yellow headed Blackbird* (cat. no. 28, p. 49) with its distant view of an Indian village. The native Americans come into sharper focus in one small painting, *Indian breast work on the river Platte* (cat. no. 26). Here, Peale strays from his assigned natural history subjects to record with documentary clarity a particular scene of Indian life as he found it. Titian Peale participated in two later extensive expeditions: a two year exploration of Colombia; and a four



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year trip around the world as a senior naturalist with the United States Exploring Expedition (1838-42, usually known as the Wilkes Expedition, after its leader, naval Lieutenant Charles Wilkes).

There is no record that his colleague on the Long Expedition ever made another wilderness journey. Samuel Seymour had also returned with a respectable set of watercolors, portraying some of the earliest views of Plains landscapes and Indian gatherings, but these works apparently failed to send off his career. Within three years, his name had faded from historical record. Perhaps this was due, in part, to the fact that, in 1820, scientific interest in the wilderness was still running ahead of public interest. Seymour's competent but unexciting little watercolors did not accomplish what Thomas Cole's more extraordinary canvases did a few years later, along with James Fenimore Cooper's first Leatherstocking tale, *The Pioneers* (1823) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). These literary bombshells by Cole's friend and neighbor quickly reached a



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wide audience and helped to stimulate broader curiosity about the frontier.

Shortly after Peale and Seymour reached the edge of the Rockies, the first true "frontier painter" was about to begin his career, but under very different circumstances. Peter Rindisbacher was a Swiss teenager, artistically precocious but mostly self-trained. In 1821, he had endured an arduous emigration to the wilds of central Canada with his homesteading family by recording highlights of the journey in closely observed documentary drawings. He continued this habit throughout his short life. His natural curiosity focused more on Indian life than on the settlers or the landscape, and his artistic ambitions seem to have been modest. The popularity of his paintings in the frontier communities where he lived, first in Canada, then in Wisconsin, nevertheless induced him to seek a more sophisticated career in the burgeoning city of St. Louis, paralleling Cole's almost exactly contemporary move from Ohio to New York City. Rindisbacher's work always remained rooted in the real frontier. Most of his depictions were based on direct observation, with little embellishment, and provided an authentic glimpse of a world known to few in the settled East. He is believed to have painted the earliest scene of a tipi interior (cat. no. 29, p. 17), and he depicted Indian women and children more often than most of the other



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painters of Indians. His views of a Chippewa family traveling in different seasons typify his documentary approach (cat. nos. 30, 31).

Rindisbacher's death in 1834, at the age of twenty eight, cut short what might have become a more illustrious career. Although his technique and style had not advanced beyond those of a provincial painter, the potential for wider recognition, based on his subject matter, had already been established. When several of his paintings were reproduced in a Baltimore magazine shortly before his death, an anonymous writer observed that Rindisbacher was the "first artist" of "untamed wilderness....[giving] to the world themes as fresh as the soil upon which he was bred." To what extent he appreciated that his work might also be among the last depictions of that wilderness is not clear, but he could hardly have been unaware that the frontier was changing daily and an entire Indian culture was changing with it. For a very brief time before the middle of the century, there were still opportunities to observe native American societies which had been little adulterated by the white man, and a trio of important artist-explorers in the 1830s sought to do just this.

There is no record that George Catlin encountered Peter Rindisbacher during his visits to the latter's adopted city between 1830 and 1834, but he must have known of his work. Catlin had already sensed the growing public interest in Indian subjects. However, his route to a career

based on that insight was very different from, and much more ambitious than, Rindisbacher's. Catlin was born only a short distance from the site of this exhibition. His father, a moderately successful lawyer, had moved to Wilkes-Barre from Connecticut, and hoped his son would follow him into the law. George's growing preoccupation with painting cut short his legal career, however, and he moved to Philadelphia in 1821 to establish himself as an artist. Like Cole and Rindisbacher, he was mostly self-taught, yet polished enough to gain acceptance in exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts within a few years. Catlin recognized, with many other young painters, that portraiture was the most reliable way of surviving as an artist, but it was not the surest road to fame and fortune. Most of the great reputations were made in the riskier, more demanding area of history painting. It must have become clear to him that, already in his thirties, he was not taking the art world by storm. Critical response to his work was rarely enthusiastic, and, on occasion, insultingly hostile. William Dunlap, the leading art critic of his day and a Thomas Cole enthusiast, flatly proclaimed Catlin "incompetent." If he was lacking in natural genius, he was not the least bit deficient in ambition and initiative. Foreseeing a dead-end career as a hack portraitist, Catlin resolved to make his mark outside of the art establishment by creating his own unique form of history painting, subject to his own standards, something Thomas Cole was beginning to do at just about the same time. (Cole and Catlin had both moved to New York City around 1825, but there is no record of them exchanging ideas.)

On several occasions, Catlin had been intrigued by Indians he had encountered in the towns and cities where he had lived, and he had even done a portrait of one of them. Now the idea struck him that the native Americans were on the verge of losing their natural culture, and only a thorough pictorial record, taken from life, would preserve their ways. Aside from the few modest Indian subjects by Seymour and Peale, which Catlin had certainly seen in the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, he probably knew of no other authentic portrayals of the Indians in their native habitats. Here was an opportunity not only to make a name for himself as an artist, but to contribute something of significance to history and science.

"City" portrayals of Indians were not exactly rare by the 1820s. Gustavus Hesselius had done several studio portraits around 1735, and Benjamin West had imagined Penn's legendary treaty with the Indians some thirty five years later, but no one had ever attempted a comprehensive record of Indian civilization. The pictorial stereotypes of the preceding two centuries continued to prevail, along with the Hobbesian and Rousseauian conceptual stereotypes, even though white men and red men had interacted over those years with steadily increasing frequency. The people having the most intimate contact with unassimilated Indians were usually not artists or writers, but traders, trappers and prospectors. Catlin understood this, and knew that his project would require a deep penetration of the unsettled frontier. With a considerable investment of time, energy, and money, he would have to retrace the steps, more or less, of Seymour and Peale.

Catlin was a man of his time, and he felt the winds of Romanticism as surely as Cole did. He wrote in his *Letters and Notes* (1841), "My enthusiastic admiration of man in the honest and elegant simplicity of nature....together with the desire to study my art independently of the embarrassments which the ridiculous fashions of civilized society have thrown in its way, has led me to the wilderness for a while, as the true school of the arts." Whatever the scientific value of his undertaking, it was audacious to the point of foolhardiness, and confirmed Catlin as both a dreamer and an adventurer. Yet, as Brian Dippie has noted in his recent study of Catlin's career, art in America "would not be the exclusive domain of moon-eyed dreamers....it would attract men of good sense dedicated to achieving success, artist-entrepreneurs, and Catlin was of the type."

When Catlin reached St. Louis in 1830, he made contact with Governor William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame), who was then Superintendent of Indian Affairs and probably as knowledgeable as anyone about the tribes west of the Mississippi. Clark greeted the artist's

plans with favor and provided him with tangible support. Catlin's first taste of the frontier was a comparatively modest trip up river to Wisconsin, followed by a side trip along the Missouri to Fort Leavenworth. This excursion prepared him mentally and logistically for a much longer journey two years later.

Catlin's 1832 expedition took him, partly by steamboat, partly by canoe, almost two thousand miles up the Missouri to Fort Union, in extreme western North Dakota. There he encountered communities of Blackfoot, Crow, and Assiniboin Indians, which were still relatively free of the white man's influence. Catlin was elated to find their culture still intact. On his return journey, he spent nearly a month with the hospitable Mandans, who were virtually extinguished by an epidemic a few years later. No artist had gone so far west or covered so much ground since Seymour and Peale, and none had ever depicted so much Indian life.

Traveling in the frontier only during the warmer months, he would usually return east in the winter in order to finish his paintings and maintain contacts with the art world. A year after his 1832 trip, he had produced enough paintings to assemble his first "Indian Gallery," which was to be the prototype for the much grander traveling exhibition he was planning. In 1834, he took the opportunity to tag along with the first United States military expedition to contact the tribes of the southwest. This trip was shorter but more grueling, made on horseback during a fiercely hot summer. Fever hit the large party before it reached the Rockies, and a third of the four hundred and fifty five soldiers died. Catlin fell ill, too, but after recovering at Fort Gibson in Oklahoma, he decided to make the five hundred mile journey back to St. Louis alone with his mustang.

Catlin's final journey into the Great Plains occurred in 1836. His objective was the legendary Pipestone Quarry in southwestern Minnesota, where the Sioux and other tribes obtained the red stone from which they made their pipes. Because of its isolation and its sanctity to the Indians, few white men had ever visited the quarry. Catlin and his two companions had to call upon all of their wits to avoid disaster at the hands of a band of guardian Sioux and to gain entrance to the mythic site. Catlin not only painted the quarry, he also examined its geological character. The red mineral which he was the first to describe was later named Catlinite in his honor. (An intuitive geologist, just as he was an intuitive ethnologist, Catlin's observations were usually astute.)

The product of Catlin's four explorations into the West was the immense touring Indian Gallery, consisting of four hundred and eighty five oil paintings, a full-size Crow tipi, and thousands of artifacts. Whatever fame or fortune it might bring him (there would be some of the former, none of the latter), Catlin could take pride in its artistic and documentary value. It was a symbiosis of art and science akin to Charles Willson Peale's museum of portraiture and natural history. The critical reception of his paintings in the New York art community was more positive in 1837 than it had been a decade earlier, and the Europeans were no less affirmative. The public, at large, also responded enthusiastically, though more to the exotic subject matter than the artistic form. Despite this success, Catlin's ardent campaign to sell the Gallery to Congress for the proposed Smithsonian Institution was a failure.

Historical opinion has varied over the years, as William Treuttner has shown in his studies on the artist. Catlin was clearly an inconsistent painter and sometimes sacrificed quality for expedience in his rush toward success. At its best, the work could be impressive and moving, and worthy of positive judgment by the likes of Delacroix and Baudelaire. Catlin seems to have been ambivalent about his goals. His mission to preserve Indian culture for posterity succeeded because it was sincere, even passionate. His mission to be remembered as a great artist ultimately failed, because, in fact, it was subordinated to his anthropological impulse. He stated, himself, in the *Letters and Notes*, that his project was more anthropological than artistic, and all his machinations to win fame as an *artist* centered on the scientific value of his work rather than the artistic. Thomas Cole, by contrast, never allowed his obsession with allegory to cloud his



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artistic perspective.

Even though Catlin's anthropological mission succeeded, the product was not flawless. Documentary assessment of his work has undergone much revision over the years. Catlin astutely realized that his largely unprecedented images had to compete with those public pictorial and literary stereotypes we have already mentioned. He appended to his *Letters and Notes* the authenticating endorsements of numerous experts in high places, such as Governor Clark. They verified that the artist had, indeed, visited the Indians on their home turf and had recorded them accurately. Not all of his contemporaries agreed with that estimate. Alfred Jacob Miller called him a "humbug," whose representations of the frontier were accepted only because the public was more naive than travelers like Miller himself. Modern scholars have turned up numerous inaccuracies and omissions, but these have not been serious enough to cast any shadow on what remains a valuable and compelling picture of Indian culture before its near-destruction.

Catlin's reportage was stylistically objective on the whole, in the tradition of artist-naturalists like Peale. His greatest achievement, the Indian portraits, reveals a mastery of insightful rendering, done with economy and flair and without unnecessary glamour or idealization (cat. no. 13, p. 46). As an artist predisposed toward portraiture, Catlin, nevertheless, also exhibited considerable fascination with the exotic genre, animal, and landscape subjects he



BUFFALO HUNT, UNDER THE WHITE WOLF SKIN.

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encountered (cat. nos. 12, p. 45; 14, 15), and he rendered them with freshness and a sense of drama, not only pictorially, but literarily (in the *Letter and Notes*), as well.

As an artist-explorer, Catlin rivaled Titian Peale in indefatigability and miles traversed. After his four trips to the West, Catlin took his Indian Gallery on tour to Europe, where he resided, off and on, for the next thirty-two years. In the 1850s, he traveled to South America, portraying some of the native tribes there, then sailed up the Pacific coast to Washington and penetrated the Rockies from the west (he had never made it into the mountains on his earlier trips). All of this speaks for a certain restlessness of spirit, not to mention endurance of body.

The second artist to trek into the deeper wilderness of the West in the 1830s made only one great journey, but it exceeded slightly in distance, and considerably in duration, any of the four Catlin made. Karl Bodmer was also a more polished and consistent artist than Catlin, although his work is less well-known to the general public. Bodmer was a twenty-three-year-old Swiss artist, already well-trained, when he was selected by Prince Maximilian of Wied to accompany him on a trip through the North American wilderness. Maximilian, born into the ruling house of a small Prussian principality, had earned considerable respect as a naturalist in the mold of the great Alexander von Humboldt. For his scientific exploration in America, he

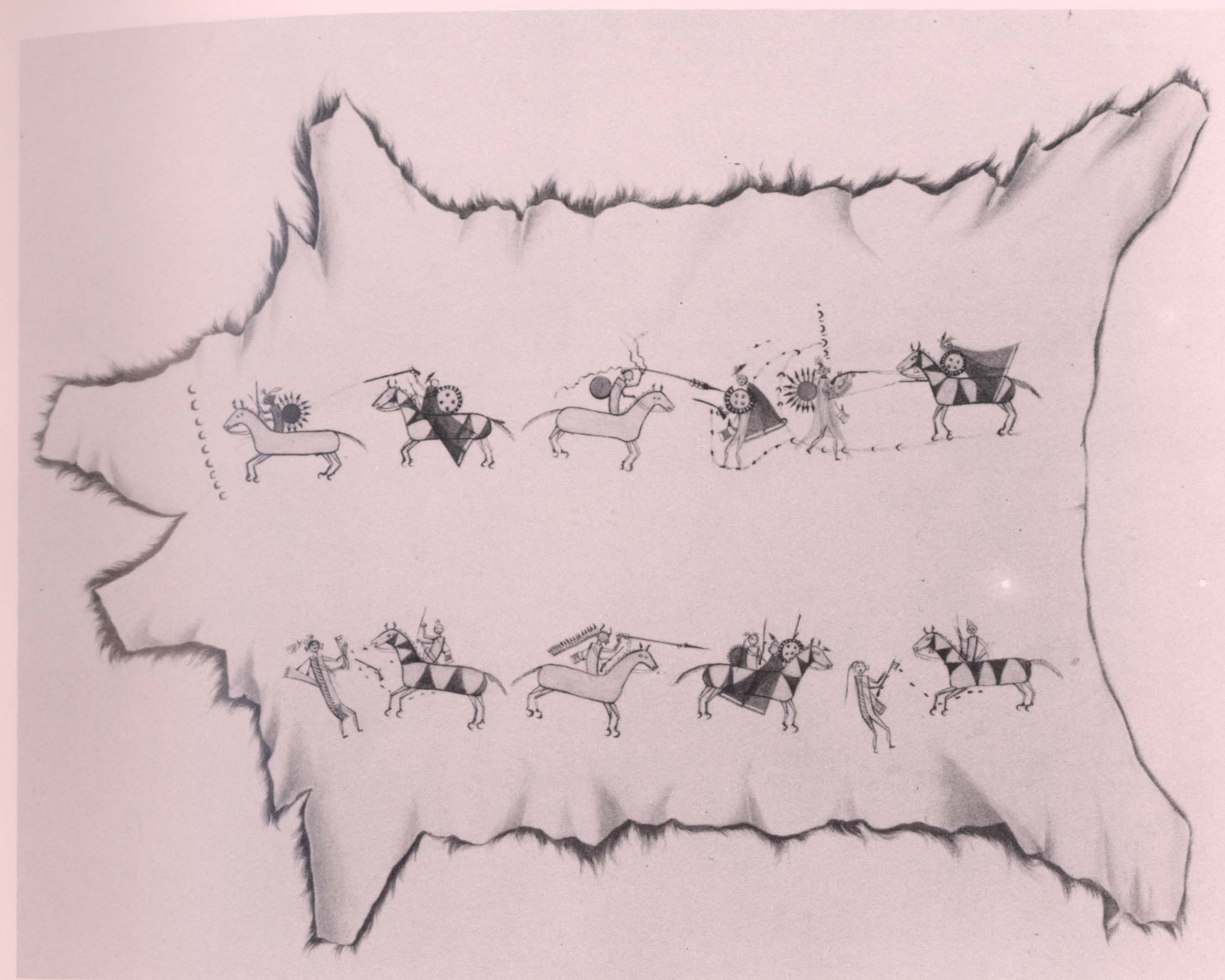
required an artist who could observe with penetration and record with precision. Bodmer was the right man, a sensitive landscapist and portraitist as well as a meticulous miniaturist. For almost a year, the artist and his patron traveled through the eastern United States making preparations for their year-long expedition. These included contacts with other scientists, naturalists, and explorers, among them Titian Peale. While viewing the paintings from the Long Expedition, Maximilian remarked with astonishment that factual representations of the Indians seemed to be so rare in the United States (this was a year before Catlin assembled his first Gallery).

When the Prince's party reached St. Louis early in 1833, they met Governor Clark and saw a number of paintings Catlin had left with Clark's nephew. They also encountered Rindisbacher's work there, and Maximilian obtained several of his watercolors. In April, the group set out on the same steamboat which had carried Catlin up the Missouri the year before. The Europeans traversed the same territory all the way up to Fort Union. Unlike their predecessor, they extended their journey into the deeper wilderness of Montana, and into the more dangerous winter season. Maximilian wanted to explore the Rockies as well as the Plains, and they reached the farthest outpost of the American Fur Company, Fort McKenzie, in August. Hostilities between neighboring Indian tribes deterred the party from further advance. Although there was always risk in traveling through the wilderness, most of the tribes east of Fort Union were on amicable terms with the white man in the 1830s. Rindisbacher, Catlin and, later, Alfred Jacob Miller never encountered any actual combat during their travels. Maximilian and Bodmer, however, did witness a bloody battle between the Blackfeet and the Assiniboin outside Fort McKenzie. Frontier wisdom warned that whites could easily be caught up in such a war, so the travelers turned back to spend the winter months at Fort Clark, a small outpost in North Dakota. It was one of the harshest winters on record; their quarters were primitive, and their provisions meager, but they managed to accumulate extensive data on the friendly Mandans, whom Catlin had visited the previous year. Although Bodmer had to thaw out his frozen colors almost every morning, he executed an impressive body of work during those hostile months.

We don't know precisely why Bodmer had sought to join Maximilian's wilderness expedition. Perhaps it was the opportunity for a young artist to make a reputation; or the promise of an expenses-paid *wanderjahre* of a kind increasingly popular with the Romantic generation. But Bodmer's crisp, objective style suggests a less restless temperament than Catlin's, and one can imagine that it was a stern Swiss resolve, as well as a disciplined absorption in his work, that kept him going through that brutal winter. Whatever the case, Bodmer never went on another expedition. After his return to Europe, he moved to France and settled down in the pastoral solace of Barbizon.

There is no question that Bodmer was a disciplined technician (Catlin, on average, probably produced half a dozen paintings to every one of Bodmer's). He typically spent two or three days on a watercolor portrait, and this carefulness has endeared him to historians and ethnologists. But what did the subjects, themselves, think about these likenesses by a white artist? Prince Maximilian wrote (as did Catlin concerning his own portraits) that reactions varied. Some Indians feared the realistic portrayals as "bad medicine," particularly in the more remote areas where realistic images of any kind had rarely been encountered. On the other hand, the Mandan, who had had longer contact with the whites and who got to know both Catlin and Bodmer well, came to appreciate good likenesses, and were often extremely proud to have themselves portrayed in this way. Two Mandans even asked to borrow Bodmer's materials so they could try working in the European manner themselves. He gracefully accommodated them (John Ewers has reproduced their efforts in *Views of a Vanishing Frontier*). Bodmer's portrayals of their decorated robes show that they worked with two kinds of images: stick figures, in scenes which commemorated the wearer's exploits (usually painted by men); and abstract geometric symbols and decorations (usually rendered by women) (cat. no. 7).

Only one person seems to have been portrayed by both Catlin and Bodmer. That was *Buffalo Bull's Back Fat*, not a Mandan, oddly enough, but a Blackfoot chief. Comparison of the



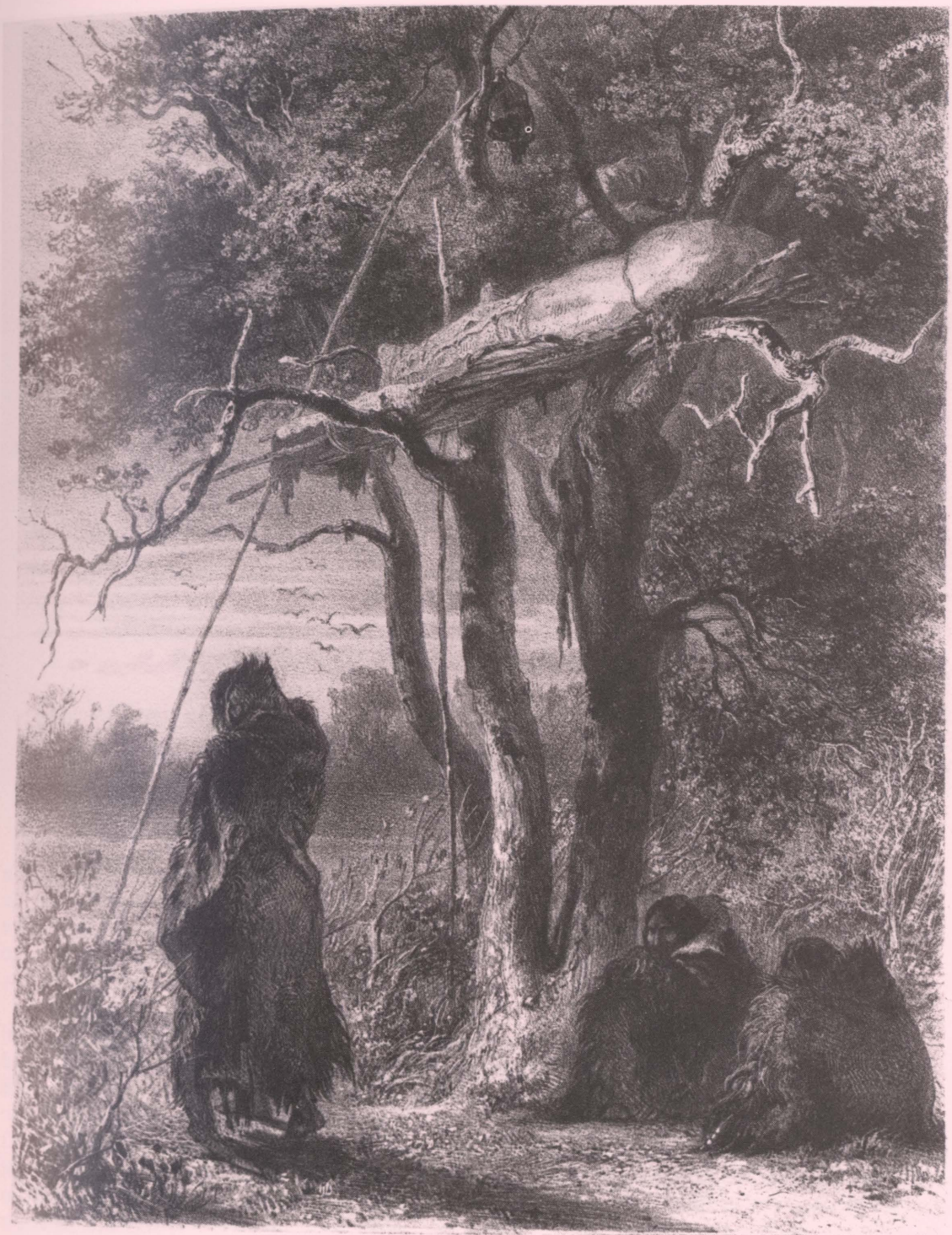
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two portraits reveals a distinct similarity of likeness, despite the difference in vantage points, thus confirming the probable accuracy of all the portraits done by the two artists. Catlin's oil paintings were done, or at least started, in the field, and show his customary bravura technique and richness of color. Bodmer's crisp field sketches were worked up into more refined engravings after his return to Europe. His powerful portrait of *Pehriska-Rúhpa (Two Ravens) in the Costume of the Dog Dance* (cat. no. 10, p. 26) typifies the kind of detailed attention to attire and paraphernalia required by the artist's naturalist patron. Bodmer and Catlin both endowed their human subjects with great dignity and vitality, as well.

Comparison of their landscapes shows that they were equally impressed by the topographical wonders they encountered. Neither painter felt any need for dramatic exaggeration (cat. nos. 6, p. 28; 12, p. 45). Catlin, more than Bodmer, however, preferred a sweeping panorama, usually from a high vantage point. The Swiss was more inclined to take a lower and closer position, allowing hills and rock formations to loom above us. In some current interpretations of landscape painting, Catlin's view reveals an implicit sense of human dominance,



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KARL BOHMEN PINT.

IMP. HERTAULTS PARIS.

EUGENE LE ROUX DEL.

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perhaps reflecting the spirit of "Manifest Destiny." Bodmer's, by contrast, suggests the awesomeness and mystery of nature, aspects of the sublime which often characterized Romantic conceptions of landscape in Europe. This quality is evident in Bodmer's *Assiniboin Medicine Sign* (cat. no. 5, p. 44), a haunting close-up of a talisman erected by the Indians near Fort Union to attract the spirits of the buffalo. Stillness and silence seem to emanate from Bodmer's lonely, windswept valley in this luminous image.

After their trek was over, Bodmer and the Prince set themselves the longer task of refining and publishing their data. For Bodmer, this meant almost four years overseeing the careful intaglio reproduction of his watercolors (cat. nos. 8, 9, 10). In the days before photographic systems of printing, publication of paintings and drawings required that they be copied in the form of engravings or lithographs. Color was usually added by hand, which meant that colored editions were very limited. Because of the broad interest in their subjects, most of the artist-explorers after 1830 had some of their work published. Maximilian had intended from the beginning, in fact, that Bodmer's pictures would accompany his written account of their expedition. Bodmer's personal involvement in the production of the portfolio took him away from other painting opportunities, but he was being well-paid for it. Bodmer's images first appeared in print form in Maximilian's *Reise in das Innere Nord-America in den Jahren 1832 bis 1834* (1839), as well as in a separate portfolio.

George Catlin also published some of his pictures, although he was more in the habit of making watercolor or pen and ink copies of his original oils. In 1844, he sought to raise funds by



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issuing his own portfolio of lithographs, *Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio* (cat. nos. 14, 15), but the venture hardly broke even. His earlier, privately published *Letters and Notes* was illustrated by printed line drawings he had adapted from his paintings.

Alfred Jacob Miller, the third artist in this trio of significant frontier explorers, produced far fewer printed versions of his paintings than either Catlin or Bodmer. Like Catlin, he made many painted copies of his originals but never seems to have been interested in exploiting his work through publication. His temperament appears to have been more dreamy than entrepreneurial. A native of Baltimore, Miller had studied in Europe and displayed a technical sophistication closer to Bodmer's than to Catlin's. His motives for accepting Captain William Drummond Stewart's offer to accompany him on a trek into the Rocky Mountains are unclear. Stewart, an adventurous Scottish aristocrat and Waterloo veteran, wanted to take an artist along on his fifth expedition to the annual trappers' rendezvous, deep in Indian country. Miller had a studio in New Orleans at the time and may have been one of the more skillful artists in that city when Stewart passed through in preparation for his expedition. The somewhat shy and



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refined artist was an unlikely companion for the swashbuckling Scot to take along into the rough and tumble frontier. Miller, for his part, was a competent but unexceptional portraitist and may have felt that this sort of Romantic odyssey could add a new dimension to his career.

Stewart's small party embarked from St. Louis, the usual gateway to the frontier, in the spring of 1837. His itinerary took them along the Platte River to Fort Laramie and up the Oregon Trail, a route farther to the south than that taken by Catlin in 1832 and Bodmer in 1833. The group reached the South Pass on the Continental Divide and pushed on into the wilderness of the Wind River Mountains. Miller was the first artist to paint this beautiful region, but he was less interested in the landscape than the Indians and trappers he encountered. He produced a steady flow of drawings and watercolors which captured the likenesses and activities of both groups. The variety of his genre subjects exceeds that of Bodmer's and Catlin's and tends to give his work a greater narrative flavor overall (cat. nos. 23, 24). Many of his scenes show interactions between trappers and Indians, including interracial contacts between men and women. Miller was as conscious as Catlin was of the fragility of Indian civilization, "melting away like snowflakes in the sun" he wrote in his *Rough Draughts*, and he was far more inclined to reveal the assimilation of the Indians than either Catlin or Bodmer, who strove to depict them in their virgin

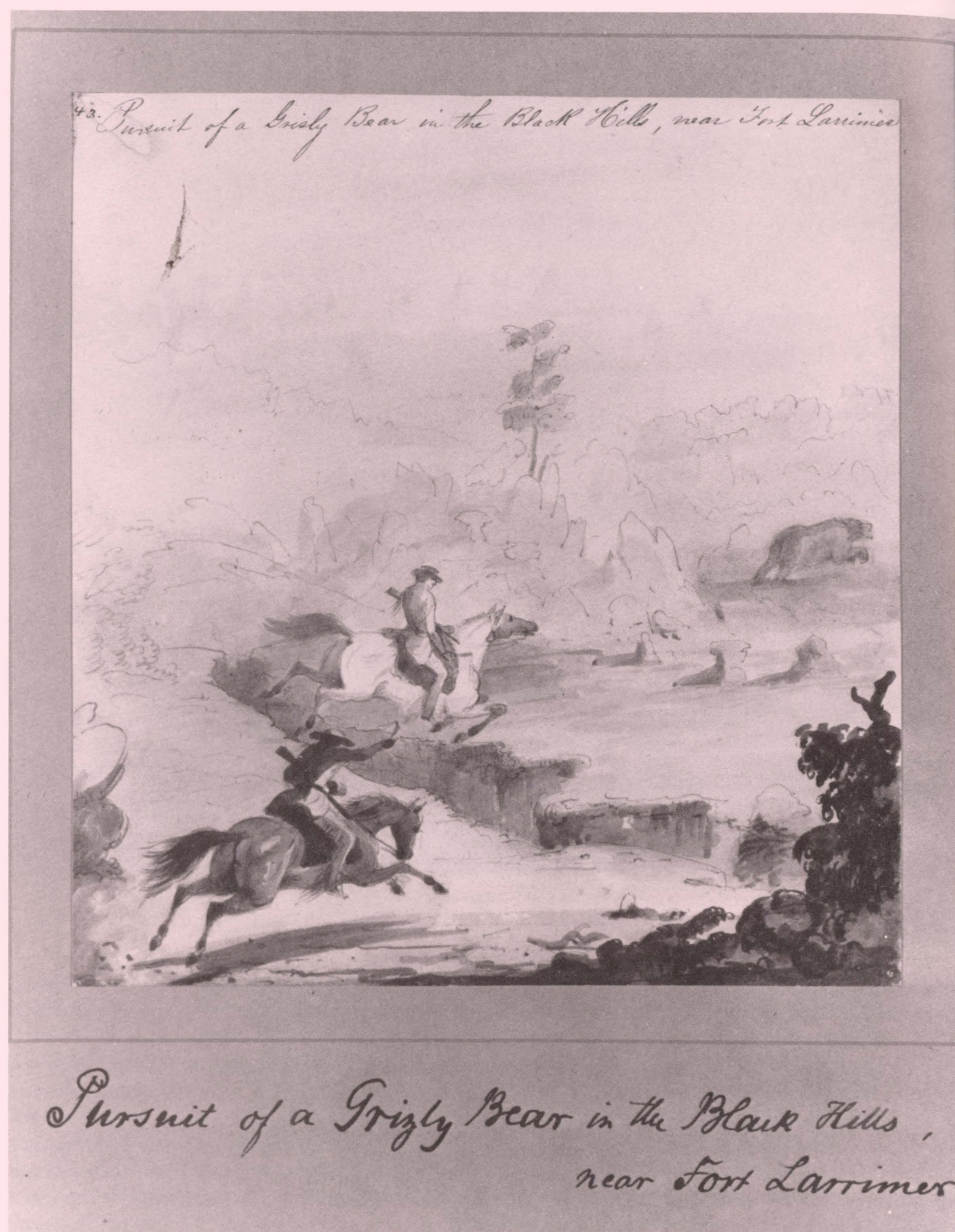


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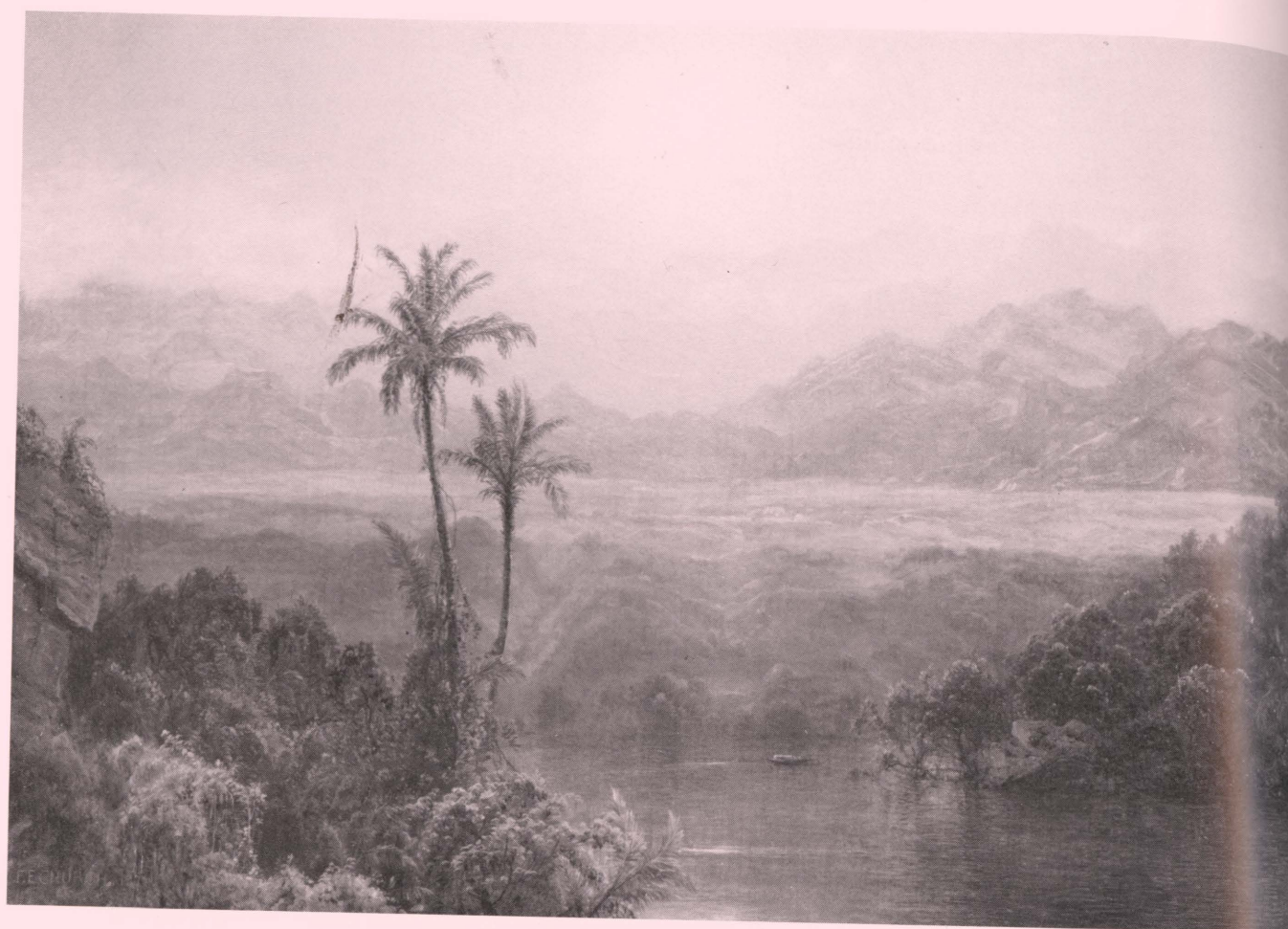
state. While Miller's pictures have important documentary value, they appear more Romantic than Catlin's and Bodmer's, due to their narrative emphasis and a loose, painterly style which echoes Rembrandt and Delacroix, two of his favorite masters.

Captain Stewart was every bit as Romantic as his artist, and his expeditions could not have been more different from Prince Maximilian's scientific quest. The army veteran set out on deliberate adventures into an exotic world accompanied by overt displays of manly endurance and flirtations with death. In Miller's drawing, *Pursuit of a Grisly* [sic] (cat. no. 22, p. 32), we see the captain attired in his trademark white buckskins galloping through the wilderness on his white stallion. He even brought along a full suit of armor for his frontiersman friend, Jim Bridger, to wear in the rendezvous parade, like a knight out of some medieval joust (this scene was also captured by Miller). The annual rendezvous was a riotous three week summerfest celebrating the past year's hunt and attracting hundreds of trappers, traders, and Indians from far and wide. Miller could claim to be the only artist who ever documented it, as well as the only artist to present any extended record of the mountain men before they washed into the flow of civilization.

Like Bodmer, Miller never went on another wilderness expedition. He settled into a



peaceful conventional career in Baltimore, painting portraits and copies of his western scenes for a gradually dwindling clientele. His picturesque style had become dated. Nevertheless, the deepened Romantic and narrative aspects of Miller's works took exploration painting a step away from the naturalist tradition of artists like Catlin, Bodmer, and Peale. They heralded a greater spirit of expressiveness, closer to Cole's, which would fire the vision of a new generation of sophisticated artist-explorers.



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FROM EXPLORATION TO TOURISM (1850-1875)

Settlement and development followed exploration with increasing rapidity after the middle of the nineteenth century. The intensified activity of the white man west of the Mississippi exacerbated hostilities with the Indians, however, making travel in many regions more dangerous than ever. The first frontier artist to die in the line of duty was a government survey topographer, Benjamin Kern, killed by Indians in 1848. His brother Richard, also a topographer, met the same fate five years later. The presence of the Army became more conspicuous as a result of these hostilities. In fact, an army man made the next significant contribution to the tradition of the artist-explorer. Seth Eastman studied drawing at West Point and painting with Robert Weir. He was first posted to Fort Crawford on the upper Mississippi in 1829 and must have been there when Catlin passed through in 1830. After a stint in Florida during the Seminole War, Eastman was reassigned to the Midwest in 1841. It was then that he began to paint more assiduously, focusing on the life and customs of the Indians, which he knew well by this time.

With his polished style and more leisurely pace, Eastman produced easel paintings which had the look of salon pieces more than field studies. The engravings he executed for Henry Schoolcraft's book on the Indians quickly made a hit and established his reputation as an authoritative interpreter of Indian culture. The basically objective approach to detail in his work reflects his background as a topographic draftsman, but his respect for the classical traditions of mainstream European art is unexpected. He sought to monumentalize his subjects through composition and figural poses, as we see in the *Indian Burial* (cat. no. 19, p. 47). Its clear references to paintings of the *Descent from the Cross* by Rubens and Caravaggio add a mythic dimension which strikes us as more artificial than Bodmer's similar subject of a funerary scaffold, executed a decade earlier (cat. no. 9). Eastman's conception satisfied the increasingly elevated tastes of the American public. An authentic Indian fighter, he was uniquely qualified to bridge convincingly the real and romantic worlds.

Romantic idealism also characterized the work of John Mix Stanley, an artist who made numerous trips into the frontier during the 1840s and 1850s, and eventually traveled all the way to Hawaii. The allegorical tone of his well-known painting *Last of Their Race* (1857, Buffalo Bill Historical Center) reflected a perspective which was more characteristic of stay-at-home dreamers than on-the-trail observers. The picture shows a group of Indians assembled on the Pacific shore with the sun setting in the background. Stanley was apparently influenced by a similar composition of the same theme, painted in 1847 by Tompkins Matteson (The New York Historical Society), a New York artist who, unlike Stanley, never went west. Of course, Stanley's picture was a patently imaginary scene, too, and it reflected the romanticizing approach which he also brought to his field painting.

By this time, sophisticated artists knew that their patrons wanted more than documentation. When Stanley put together an Indian Gallery of his own, following Catlin's precedent, the paintings were larger and more dramatic, if not melodramatic, in composition and expression than Catlin's. In spite of this, Stanley's efforts to sell the collection to Congress were no more successful than his competitor's. Unhappily in 1865, most of it perished in a fire at the

Smithsonian, where it had been on loan for a number of years. (Catlin's Gallery was given to the Smithsonian after his death, and it remains there today.)

Better known for his Indian subjects, Stanley was also a fine landscapist. In this area, he tended to work more objectively, as we see in *Snake River* (cat. no. 33, p. 50), probably painted after his 1853 trip with Isaac Stevens's expedition to the Washington Territory. Notwithstanding picturesque conventions of color and composition, the idiosyncratic details of a specific wilderness site are registered clearly in this painting. The Stevens Expedition was one of the numerous Pacific railroad surveys which plotted out the transcontinental system, and in this context, Stanley naturally gave more attention to the topographic realities of the scene.

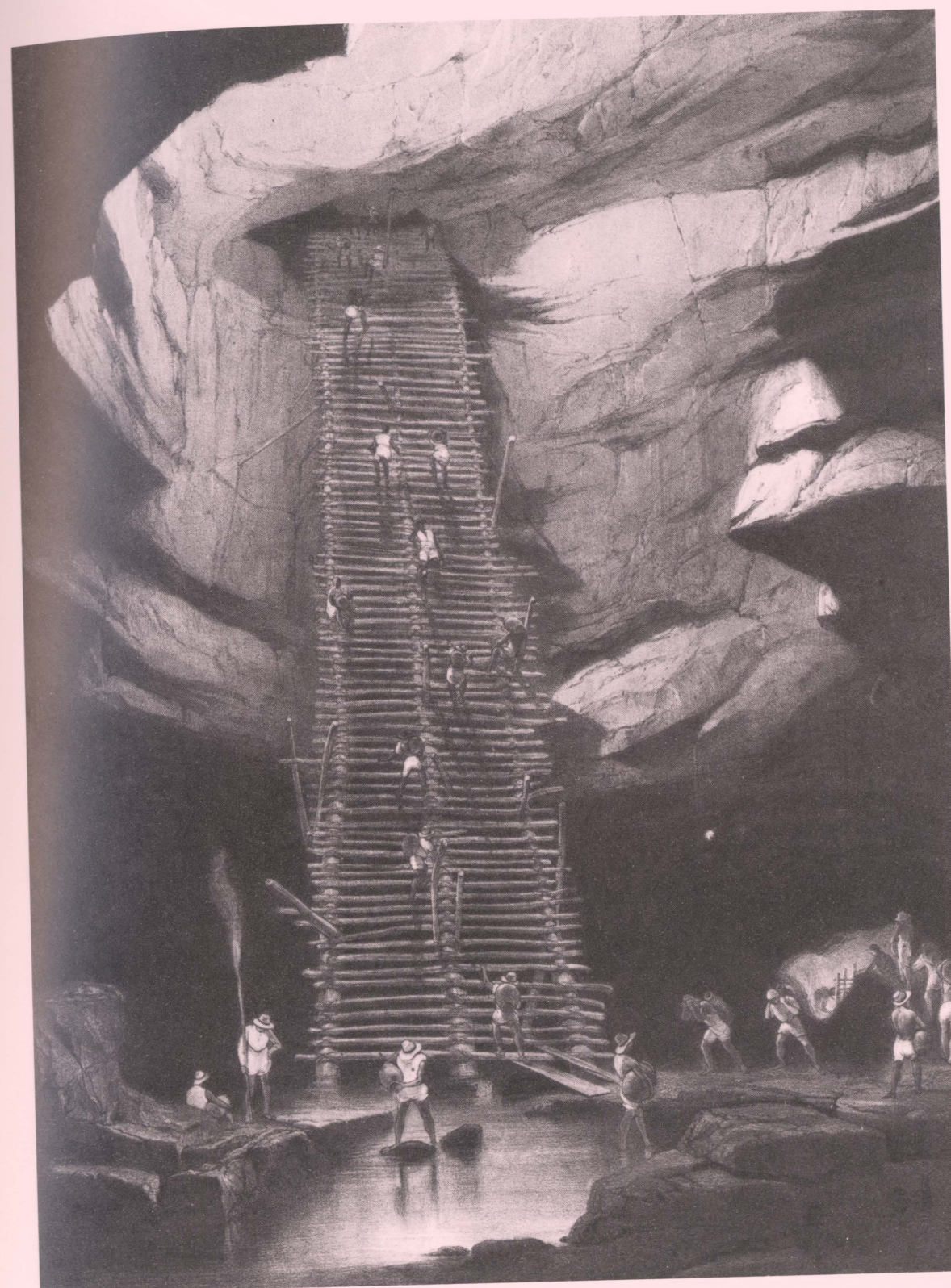
When the Golden Spike was driven into the final rail in 1869, it was also driven into the heart of the wilderness. The next generation of artists exploring the West, sometimes by train, discovered that the virgin landscape was vanishing almost as rapidly as the native American. Artists with a profound wanderlust began to seek out alternative itineraries. One of the greatest American landscape painters of the period, Frederic Edwin Church, turned his gaze southward rather than westward. We have already mentioned the early expedition of Count Maurits in Brazil, the later journeys of Humboldt and Maximilian of Wied (both accompanied by artists), Titian Peale's 1830 trip to Colombia, and Catlin's excursion (or should we say, exile) through the southern continent in the 1850s.

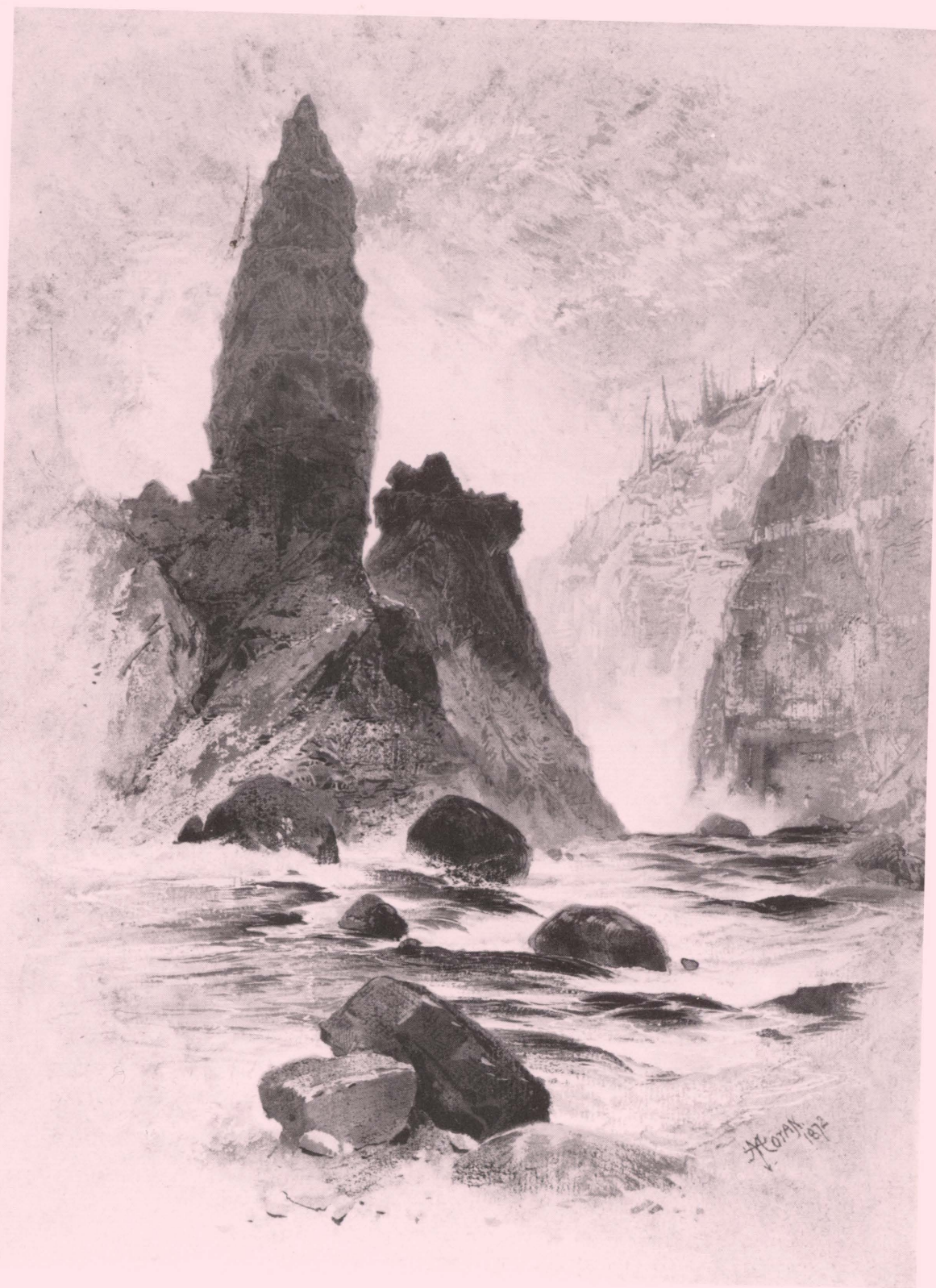
Frederic Church made his first trip to Colombia in 1853, and went there again in 1857. (In 1859, he went to the other extreme and joined an expedition into the Arctic.) A student of Thomas Cole, he was already famous for his Hudson River School works. Like his mentor, he sensed the epic implications of the landscape, but framed them in a more scientific context. He was an avid follower of Humboldt's work, and took an especially keen interest in current geological theories (as did Catlin). Out of this grew his infatuation with volcanoes; his many views of Cotopaxi in Ecuador are among his best-known paintings. *In the Andes* (cat. no. 16, p. 34), a late work based on his earlier trips, reveals his complementary interest in exotic flora and fauna, in their own way as suggestive of the primordial world as the volcano. The spiritual and the scientific continued to be intimately linked in the contemplation of the natural world. Humboldt, Darwin, and many other naturalists at this time sought the keys to Creation in the plants and rocks they studied. Landscape painters like Church embraced this same goal in their own way.

All the artist-explorers we have examined had been touched, in one way or another, by the historical implications of their subjects. Whether it was geological history or human history, the artist was increasingly cognizant of time and the tension between change and eternity. This was graphically evident in Romanticism's fascination with ruins. Alfred Jacob Miller was not alone in likening certain American landscape formations to ancient architectural ruins. Catlin and Bodmer had both painted the "white castles" along the Missouri. But real architectural ruins were virtually non-existent in the wildernesses of North America. Indian civilization might be dying in the Plains and Rockies, but it would leave little physical evidence behind. Only in the deep southwest and in Mexico and Guatemala were there conspicuous architectural remnants of ancient cultures.

One of the first artists, and arguably the most impressive, to seek out these ruins was an English architect named Frederick Catherwood. In 1839, with his American companion, the amateur archaeologist John L. Stephens, he traveled to the home of the Mayas and Aztecs. Catherwood had taken part as a draftsman in previous archaeological expeditions in Egypt and the Near East, so he was well-equipped for this independent undertaking. He and Stephens rediscovered the ancient cities of Copan and Palenque on their first trip. They returned in 1841 to excavate fifty more sites. Catherwood's sketches and subsequent engravings (cat. no. 11) brought these ruins to evocative life. In the best tradition of romantic realism, he often cloaked his accurate renderings in mysterious Piranesian lighting and perspective.

After the Civil War, exploration of the western United States intensified, and more and





more artists either joined the various geological surveys or mounted their own forays into the shrinking wilderness. Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran stand out among this group for the sheer metric and aesthetic extravagance of their work. Coming near the end of a century of artistic exploration in the American frontier, these two men assimilated virtually every previous conception of wilderness landscape and orchestrated into their personal visions those elements most likely to transform reality into myth, without obliterating the reality. Cole and Church had provided the dominant models. Bierstadt and Moran sought to capture the immensity of nature on vast canvases filled with an astonishing variety of topographical and meteorological features. Their canvases frequently stretched ten feet and more across, and Bierstadt occasionally spotlighted his grandiloquent views within darkened proscenias to reinforce their impact on the spectator. As Patricia Trenton and Peter Hassrick have pointed out, these paintings were in "perfect keeping with the gargantuan vulgarity of the new business class" which patronized these artists.

They also, however, echoed the more highminded expressions of aestheticians like John Ruskin, whose essay on mountain beauty was a veritable recipe for their effects (*Modern Painters*, part V, 1856). Just as Church and Cole had adopted various heroic conventions of European landscape painting, Bierstadt and Moran assembled stock compositions and effects which became virtual clichés in their work. Bierstadt, a native German, was especially influenced by the then popular Düsseldorf School, and his Rocky Mountains sometimes appear more Alpine than American. Verisimilitude existed in details, but the whole was a fiction based on many different places and effects of atmosphere. The "truth" of the whole lay in its overall sensation of grandeur and magic, which a traveler through the mountains might experience either cumulatively or at some chance moment of perfection. Moran said that while he "desired to tell truly of Nature, [he] did not wish to realize the scene literally, but to preserve and to convey its true impression."

Underlying these justifications, of course, there were still the allegorical concerns of time and Creation which had preoccupied Cole. Moran's small study of *Tower Falls, Yellowstone* (cat. no. 25), while more documentary than his larger pastiches, nevertheless achieves an effect of primordial sublimity. (Images such as these played their part in the establishment of the national parks and the preservation movement later in the century.) The ancient landscape was not always defined in terms of great peaks and valleys. More often, in fact, a less rugged terrain characterized Eden and Arcadia. Leo Marx has differentiated the "primitive" landscape and the "pastoral" one. Most Arcadian scenes in the Claude Lorrain tradition suggest a primitive landscape only in remote mountainous backgrounds, while the nearer stages show a more gentle pastoral environment. Bierstadt's *On the Oregon Trail* (cat. no. 3, p. 43; a copy of a larger work) alters this formula slightly by juxtaposing pastoral and primitive on the left and right, rather than front and back. This picture also gives man a greater role than is usual in Bierstadt's work. Here he combines past and present — geological creation and historical progress — in his sweeping middleground, and allows the radiant sunset beyond to augur the golden future. Here is Manifest Destiny in full stride.

The spirit of Bierstadt's picture could not be more different from the very similar subject painted by James F. Wilkins some twenty years earlier (cat. no. 35, p. 41). With the purpose of putting together a "moving panorama" of the Overland Trail during the Gold Rush, Wilkins traveled along the trail and saw its wilderness scenery in a more virgin state than Bierstadt did. But he sought to capture the drama and magnitude of the Rockies in a more reportorial way, suitable for a descriptive entertainment. ("Moving panoramas" were either sequential presentations of individual paintings, akin to a modern slide show, or else unfolding canvases of continuous imagery. These travelogues became very popular at mid-century and were more dramatic in form than exhibits like the Indian galleries, although Catlin later spiced up his gallery with real Indians performing native dances.) Bierstadt, of course, also had public responses in mind. In contrast to Wilkins's reserved scene, his visual epic may seem overblown



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today, but one cannot deny his canny showmanship or the ingenuity with which he struck so many conceptual and visceral chords relating to nature, nationalism, and divinity.

The pastoral mode of wilderness painting ripened as the wilderness itself became less ubiquitous and its solitude more alluring. The Hudson River painters and then the Luminists had already savored the still and silent moods of nature. Worthington Whittredge was one of several offspring of the Hudson River School who toured the far West in the 1860s and 1870s (his friends J. F. Kensett and Sanford Gifford were others). An accomplished landscapist who had spent ten years studying and traveling in Europe (where he had shared a studio with Bierstadt), Whittredge accompanied General John Pope's inspection tour of Colorado and New Mexico in 1866. He made two more trips west several years later. He may have been motivated, in part, by Bierstadt's professional success with western themes, but he also sought fresh inspiration, free from the Düsseldorf influence. While he journeyed into some remote mountainous areas, Whittredge, unlike his German friend, found his inspiration on the plains. There was "grandeur in the horizontal as well as the perpendicular," he said. *Cattle Grazing Along the Platte* (cat. no. 34) typifies the bucolic sketches he did of the prairie. One wonders how near this location was to Titian Peale's (cat. no. 26), painted half a century earlier along the same river. Stylistically, of course, they are miles apart, yet the later work by no means lacks sound reportage, or the earlier one a flavor of the pastoral. The ratios have only been reversed.

Whittredge had begun to feel the influence of the French Barbizon School, whose rustic quietude replaced Düsseldorf drama in the tastes of the seventies. His younger compatriot Ralph Blakelock, who brings our survey to a close, shared in this transition. Blakelock could



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hardly be called an artist-explorer in the literal sense that has been adopted for this exhibition. He made the first of his two trips to the West in 1869, three years after Whittredge, and apparently broke no fresh trails. (Thomas Moran didn't reach the West until 1871, but he traveled in country which was still quite wild.) Blakelock represents a new breed of artist-travelers, or "Romantic wanderers," as Katherine Manthorne has called them, whose explorations were as much psychological or dramaturgical as they were geographical. Bierstadt's paintings, even at their most romantic and imaginary, were still primarily about the wilderness, of which he had some direct knowledge. Blakelock's seem to have been more about his personal relationship with Nature — dreams and reveries rather than particular places. His *Landscape* (cat. no. 4, p. 42), probably done long after his trips, imagines a bucolic Indian camp nestled into an Arcadian wilderness. Here nostalgia has supplanted reality and allegory alike — nostalgia for a vanished landscape and a vanished culture, but without ideology. (In their own ways, Blakelock's younger contemporaries, Frederic Remington and Charles Russell, represented this same approach.) Blakelock's introspection ultimately ended in complete mental breakdown. He found an internal wilderness which Romantics had sought as passionately as external ones.



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In the beginning, the artist-explorer had been more explorer than artist, and he had given precedence to documentary values over artistic ones. As the wilderness and its inhabitants gained favor as a source of aesthetic and iconographic contemplation in the nineteenth century, artists of greater accomplishment had been drawn to visit them, and artistic values came to rival and exceed the documentary ones. Men such as Peale, Catlin, and Eastman were naturalists, draftsmen, or topographers as much as they were "fine artists," but after them, artist-explorers were generally of one kind, but not the other. Topographic specialists (who are not included in this exhibition) were sought by most of the later surveying expeditions, and most of them soon traded their pens for cameras. Photography invaded the fine and popular arts, as well, toward the last quarter of the century. Bierstadt, for example, frequently used photographs in place of sketches, and the public's appetite for images of the frontier could be cheaply fed with stereoscopic views. As the era of North American exploration rode to its end, cameramen like William H. Jackson and Carlton Watkins could provide exact descriptions of the last frontiers. Painters such as Bierstadt, Whittredge and Blakelock no longer had obligations of that kind.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (1785-1851)

Born in Haiti to a French father and a Creole mother, Audubon was educated in France and studied briefly with Jacques Louis David. In 1803, he returned to his father's estate in Mill Grove, Pennsylvania, and began collecting and drawing wildlife. After several business failures in Kentucky, he moved, in 1820, to New Orleans to devote himself to natural history painting. His monumental corpus on North American birds, published between 1826 and 1838, entailed extensive field work throughout the East and Midwest. In 1842, he began a similar opus on mammals, which took him as far as the Yellowstone River. Audubon's artistry and personal charisma brought him fame both here and abroad. His innovative portrayal of specimens as "alive and moving," along with the sheer magnitude of his projects, established him as America's foremost artist-naturalist.

WILLIAM BARTRAM (1739-1823)

Bartram was born in Kingsessing, near Philadelphia, where his father was an eminent botanical gardener. His early drawings attracted the attention of European naturalists, and he and his father were commissioned to collect specimens in Florida. In the 1770s, he took a more extensive field trip throughout the southeast, reaching as far as the Mississippi. After 1777, he managed the family gardens and never made another long exploration. His book of *Travels* (1791), based on the earlier tours, was a popular work. His naturalist drawings were typical of the genre in the eighteenth century, and, like Audubon, he almost never departed from his specialty.

ALBERT BIERSTADT (1830-1902)

In 1832, Bierstadt's family moved to Massachusetts from his native Solingen in Germany. He may have been mostly self-taught as an artist. In 1853, he went to Düsseldorf to polish his skills, but did not enter the academy. He shared a studio there with Worthington Whittridge, did much outdoor sketching, and traveled extensively in Germany and Italy. Returning to America in 1857, he joined Colonel Frederick Lander's survey expedition into the Wind River Mountains, and returned to New York City to begin his large canvases of the West. Popular and critical acclaim followed soon after. Bierstadt made many more trips west between 1863 and 1889. He was an effective promoter of his work and achieved great wealth at the height of his success. His later work became harder in style, formulaic, and less fashionable. His career declined rapidly in the 1880s, and he died in much reduced circumstances.

RALPH ALBERT BLAKELOCK (1847-1919)

Blakelock was born in New York City, and gave up medical studies to become an artist. He was mostly self-taught, experimentive with media (which led to the darkening of many of his paintings), and neurotic in behavior. He toured the West in 1869 and 1871, and used his impressions later on to create evocative, often visionary, landscapes of a highly personal kind. His style was influenced by the French Barbizon painters, but his increasingly subjective approach was closer to the newer Symbolists. Critical reaction was mixed, and his career suffered, leading to an incurable mental breakdown in 1899. Soon after, his work gained fresh and positive notice, but it was too late. While he lay dying in a sanatorium, forgers were already at work copying his style to meet the new demand.

KARL BODMER (1809-1893)

Bodmer was born near Zurich and studied with his uncle, Johann Meyer, as well as in Paris. Shortly after opening a studio in Koblenz, Germany, he met Prince Maximilian of Wied and thus began the most significant part of his long career. In 1834, after his American expedition with the Prince, Bodmer settled in Paris, where he worked for four years on the engravings made from his field sketches. In 1849, he moved to the artists' community of Barbizon and settled into a moderately successful career. He turned to magazine and book illustration later in life.

FREDERICK CATHERWOOD (1799-1854)

Catherwood studied architecture and exhibited watercolors in his native London before joining Robert Haig's expedition to Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia in 1831. He met the American archaeologist John L. Stephens in 1836, and they made their first trip to Central America three years later. Catherwood made three more journeys to

South and Central America and to California by way of the Pacific Coast. In between these excursions, he spent much time in New York City working on the publication of his field work. In 1854, returning to New York, after a trip back home to England, he was lost at sea with the steamship *Arctic*. Like Bodmer, Catherwood achieved historical significance by mating his estimable artistic sensitivity to an extraordinary subject.

GEORGE CATLIN (1796-1872)

Catlin was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and spent much of his childhood in Broome County, New York. He opened a law practice in Montrose, Pennsylvania, but soon gave it up for an art career, moving to Philadelphia in 1821. Experiencing only modest success as a mostly self-taught portraitist, Catlin determined to make his name as a painter of the Indians. His four expeditions between 1830 and 1836 covered vast stretches of the Prairie. In 1837, he opened his touring "Indian Gallery" in New York, to public and critical acclaim. He experienced even greater success in London (1840) and Paris (1845). Expenses exceeded revenues, however, and bad investments ultimately brought bankruptcy. Partly to escape creditors, he traveled through South America and up the Pacific coast to California between 1852 and 1859. Catlin had dreamed of selling the entire Indian Gallery to the government; instead, he lost it in the bankruptcy. From 1860 to 1870, he lived in Brussels, trying to reconstruct the Gallery. Despite his peripatetic ways, Catlin was an exceptionally prolific artist who also found time to publish several books on his travels.

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH (1826-1900)

A native of Hartford, Church studied with Thomas Cole, who influenced him considerably. By his mid-twenties, Church was already a successful New York artist, regarded by many as the successor of Cole, who had died in 1848. In his search for inspiring landscapes, he began to travel extensively through eastern North America. His work became less allegorical and more concerned with light and topography. He made his first trip to South America in 1853. He later traveled to Labrador, Europe, the Middle East, and Mexico. His taste for the exotic is seen in his villa, Olana, overlooking the Hudson River, as well as in his paintings. After the mid-sixties, his work often became excessively melodramatic, but he retained his reputation as one of America's greatest landscapists.

THOMAS COLE (1801-1848)

Cole and his family immigrated from Lancashire in 1818. They settled eventually in Steubenville, Ohio, where Thomas designed patterns for his father's wallpaper factory and learned the rudiments of portraiture from an itinerant painter. In 1823, he began his serious career as an artist in Philadelphia, then moved on to New York City, determined to be a landscapist, up to that time a less popular specialty in American art. His style of grandeur and drama changed that, and his ascent in the art world was rapid. After a three year trip to Europe, he turned increasingly to allegorical landscapes, such as his series, *The Course of Empire*. In 1836, he settled in Catskill, New York, closer to the mountains he loved.

THOMAS DAVIES (ca. 1737-1812)

Davies was a British army officer who served in North America from 1759 to 1790. Having studied drawing and painting as a cadet, possibly under the eminent watercolorist Paul Sandby, he was often assigned to do topographical studies. In 1760, he explored the Lake Ontario region, and about 1768, he published six views of American waterfalls. Although he was a professional soldier, Davies enjoyed considerable respect both as an artist and a naturalist. After his retirement from the service, at the rank of lieutenant general, he continued to paint and to exhibit at the Royal Academy. He is best remembered today, however, for his early documentation of the Canadian wilderness.

SETH EASTMAN (1808-1875)

A native of Maine, Eastman graduated from West Point in 1829 and made the army his career. He was first assigned to Fort Crawford in Wisconsin, and later served in Minnesota, Florida, and Texas, in addition to administrative stints in Washington, D.C. He also taught drawing at West Point between 1833 and 1840, at which time he studied painting with the Hudson River artist Robert Weir. His Indian paintings began to attract attention in 1848, when he was in Washington. Much of his career involved the American Indian, and, of all the Indian painters, he spent the most time on the frontier. This experience added weight to his reputation as a faithful recorder of Indian culture.

GEORGE HERIOT (1766-1844)

Heriot was a military cadet who opted for a civil service and artistic career instead. Born in Scotland, he had studied painting in England with Paul Sandby; in 1792, he went to Canada where he joined the postal service, eventually becoming postmaster-general of the North American colonies. This position afforded him an opportunity to travel extensively about the territories. A man of wide interests, Heriot began a multivolume *History of Canada* (one volume was completed, in 1804), and published an illustrated *Travels through the Canadas* (1807). He moved back to Britain in 1816, but continued to travel, paint, and write in Europe.

ALFRED JACOB MILLER (1810-1874)

Miller was born in Baltimore. There is conjecture, but no evidence, that he studied under Thomas Sully. In 1833, he visited Europe, taking courses at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and mingling with prominent artists. After returning to the United States the following year, he moved to New Orleans and opened a studio. It was there that Captain W. D. Stewart saw Miller's work in 1837 and invited him to document his hunting expedition to the Rockies. After this extraordinary detour in his conventional career, he moved back to Baltimore and divided his time between copying his frontier sketches and painting portraits. After about 1860, his delicate Romanticism became less fashionable, and demand for his work declined. Miller was not an aggressive promoter of his work, and it was rarely reproduced during his lifetime.

THOMAS MORAN (1837-1926)

Like Thomas Cole before him, Moran moved with his family from Lancashire. They settled in Philadelphia in 1844, and Thomas became an apprentice wood engraver. He also frequented the Pennsylvania Academy exhibitions and traveled to England, in 1861, to see Turner's work. His success as an artist, again like Cole, was almost immediate. In his search for grander landscapes to portray, he joined F. V. Hayden's survey expedition to Yellowstone in 1871, the first of many trips to the West. Congress purchased his huge *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* the following year, and some critics called him the "Turner of the West."

TITIAN RAMSAY PEALE, II (1799-1885)

Titian was the sixteenth of seventeen children born to the eminent Philadelphia painter and naturalist, Charles Willson Peale, (his namesake brother, Titian I, died the year before his birth). Like many of his siblings, he established himself as an artist; and growing up in his father's natural history museum, he became a naturalist as well. He studied anatomy and entomology, was an avid hunter and collector, and became an expert taxidermist. His part in the pathbreaking Long Expedition in 1821 ensured his place in history. His subsequent tours to South America and around the world (the Wilkes Expedition) took him away from the curatorship of his father's museum, and bankruptcy forced its closure in 1842. Titian became an examiner for the U.S. Patent Office after his unsuccessful candidacy to become first curator of the Smithsonian Museum.

PETER RINDISBACHER (1806-1834)

Rindisbacher was born in the Canton of Berne in Switzerland. He studied briefly with a local painter before his family answered Lord Thomas Douglas's call for emigrants to the Red River Colony in Manitoba, Canada, in 1820. After a few years, he became Colony Clerk, a post which allowed him to travel extensively through the territory and to record the life of both settlers and Indians. In 1826, the family moved south into Wisconsin. Rindisbacher's provincial success as a painter prompted him to seek wider notice in St. Louis, where he opened a studio in 1829. His untimely death from unknown causes at the age of twenty eight cut short that quest. Whatever future he might have had, no one can dispute his importance as the first comprehensive painter of Indian life on the frontier.

SAMUEL SEYMOUR (fl. 1797-1823)

Biographical information on Seymour is scant. He was probably born in England, but was working as an engraver in Philadelphia by 1808. After a seemingly modest early career, he was selected for the Long Expedition in 1819. In 1822, Seymour's name no longer appears in the Philadelphia census, although he was reportedly seen in New York City by an acquaintance the following year. There is speculation that he returned to England and may have dropped out of the art profession. Seymour's existence in recorded history is thus predicated almost entirely on his brief role as an artist-explorer.

JOHN MIX STANLEY (1814-1872)

Born in Canandaigua, New York, Stanley began his career as a sign painter. In 1834, he settled in Detroit, where he took lessons from a local portraitist. Recognizing the new popularity of Indian subjects, he traveled to Wisconsin in 1839 to make on-the-spot sketches. This was the first of many trips to all corners of the West as well as Hawaii. Ambitious and energetic, like his predecessor Catlin, Stanley created both a touring Indian Gallery and a moving panorama, *Stanley's Western Wilds or, the Indian and His Country*. He also tried, in vain, to sell his Gallery to the government. In 1864, he ended his traveling and returned to Detroit.

WORTHINGTON WHITTREDGE (1820-1910)

Born in Springfield, Ohio, he began his career as a portraitist in Cincinnati. In 1849, he went to Düsseldorf to study for five years, and spent another five in Rome. He returned to America as a landscapist and opened a studio in New York. Seeking a wilder landscape inspiration, he joined the Pope Expedition in Colorado and New Mexico in 1866. He made two more trips in the West in 1870 and 1871, and visited Mexico in the nineties. As a member of the Hudson River tradition, he is better known for his Catskill landscapes than his western ones. The poetic realism of his style contrasted markedly with the more flamboyant manner of such contemporaries as Bierstadt, Church, and Moran, and proved durable throughout his long career.

JAMES F. WILKINS (1808-1888)

An Englishman, Wilkins studied portraiture at the Royal Academy. In 1844, he settled in St. Louis. The California Gold Rush inspired him, in 1849, to make a sketching tour of the Overland Trail, via wagon train, in preparation for a moving panorama. The panorama, completed in 1850, was a great success, and he continued to do imaginary landscapes based on his travels. His written diary was also a valuable document of life on the Trail.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

In the preparation of this exhibition, the following sources were of particular value and are recommended for further reading.

A valuable reference work is William H. Gerdts' massive *Art Across America* (New York, 1990), which includes many little-known artists. A brief, but useful, earlier survey is J. T. Flexner's *Nineteenth Century American Painting* (New York, 1970). For biographical material on the artists, the standard biographical reference books and individual monographs were consulted.

On the earliest artist-explorers, Hugh Honour's *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time* (London, 1976) offers much fascinating material. Of similar value is Edward J. Nygren's *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830* (Washington, D.C., 1986). E. P. Richardson's general history, *Painting in America* (New York, 1956), contains a chapter on early artist-explorers.

On the themes of the American Indian and the western frontier, there is an extensive literature. Providing broad coverage with some controversial interpretations is William H. Truettner (ed.), *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820 - 1920* (Washington, D.C., 1991). Less broad, but equally revisionist, are the essays in *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven, 1992) by Jules David Prown, Nancy K. Anderson, William Cronon, Brian W. Dippie, Martha A. Sandweiss, Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, and Howard R. Lamar. An earlier set of interesting essays appears in John F. McDermott (ed.), *The Frontier Re-Examined* (Urbana, 1967). Patricia Trenton and Peter Hassrick's *The Rocky Mountains: A Vision for Artists in the Nineteenth Century* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1983) provides extensive material on lesser-known as well as major artists in the far West. Two useful catalogues of narrower focus, from the Joslyn Art Museum's Center for Western Studies, are William H. Goetzmann and Joseph C. Porter's *The West as Romantic Horizon* (Omaha, 1981), with emphasis on Bodmer and Miller, and John C. Ewers, et al, *Views of a Vanishing Frontier* (Omaha, 1984), centering on Bodmer. William H. Truettner's, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C., 1979) is the definitive work on its subject. For a fascinating account of the saga surrounding the Indian collections of Catlin, Eastman, and Stanley, see Brian W. Dippie's *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1990).

On North Americans in South America, essential information appears in Katherine Emma Manthorne's *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839 - 1879* (Washington, D.C., 1989) and Dawn Ades (ed.) *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820 - 1980* (New Haven, 1989).

Broader, more philosophical discussions of the themes of nature and landscape may be found in Barbara Novak's *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825 - 1875* (New York, 1980), Albert Boime's *The Magisterial Gaze* (Washington, D.C., 1991), and Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, 1967).

Among the writings by the artists themselves or their associates, several are of particular interest: George Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (London, 1841); Thomas Cole's "Essay on American Scenery" (1835), in John McCoubrey (ed.) *American Art, 1700 - 1960* (Englewood Cliffs, 1965); Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America* (London, 1843); and William Bartram's *Travels* (edited by Francis Harper, New Haven, 1958).

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

1. John James Audubon (1785-1851)
Towhe Bunting; Fringilla Erythrophthalma Linn., Blackberry Rubus Villus, n.d.
Hand colored lithograph, 27 1/2 x 20 inches
The C. B. Reif Collection of Natural History Prints, Wilkes University
2. William Bartram (1739-1823)
Canna Indica, Tab. VIII (Elements), 1784
Ink on paper, 21.0 cm x 26.9 cm (8 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches)
American Philosophical Society
3. Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)
The Oregon Trail, 1869
Oil on canvas, 31 x 49 inches
The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio
4. Ralph Albert Blakelock (1847-1919)
Landscape, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 16 x 24 inches
Collection of Heckscher Museum, Huntington, New York, August Heckscher Collection.
5. Karl Bodmer (1809-1893)
Assiniboin Medicine Sign, 1833
Watercolor on paper, 9 5/8 x 12 1/4 inches
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.
6. Karl Bodmer (1809-1893)
Rock Formations on the Upper Missouri, 1833
Watercolor on paper, 7 7/8 x 12 3/8 inches
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.
7. Karl Bodmer (1809-1893)
Hidatsa Buffalo Robe, c. 1840
Watercolor on paper, 14 x 17 5/8 inches
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation.
8. Karl Bodmer (1809-1893)
Forest on the Lehigh, n.d.
Hand-colored lithograph, 13 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches
Imp. de Bougeard, Gravé par Salathe
Gilbert McClintock Collection, Eugene Shedden Farley Library, Wilkes University
9. Karl Bodmer (1809-1893)
Tombeaux des Indiens Sioux, n.d.
Lithograph, 8 1/4 x 6 1/4 inches
Imp. Bertauts, Paris, Eugene Le Roux del.
Gilbert McClintock Collection, Eugene Shedden Farley Library, Wilkes University
10. Karl Bodmer (1809-1893)
Pehriska-Ruhpa; Moennitarri Warrior in the costume of the Dog Danse [sic], n.d.
Hand-colored aquatint and line engraving, 21 5/16 x 15 9/16 inches
Imp. de Bougeard, Sc. René Rollet; Published by Ackerman & Co., London
Sordoni Family Collection
11. Frederick Catherwood (1799-1854)
Well at Bolonchen, 1884 (from an ink drawing done in 1843)
Colored lithograph, 377 mm x 277 mm (14 3/4 x 10 3/4 inches)
Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Henry Schnackenberg.

12. George Catlin (1796-1872)
Mouth of the Platte River, 900 Miles Above St. Louis, 1832
Oil on canvas, 11 1/4 x 14 1/2 inches
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.
13. George Catlin (1796-1872)
Corn, A Miniconjou Warrior, 1832
Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 inches
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.
14. George Catlin (1796-1872)
Wounded Buffalo Bull Surrounded by White Wolves, n.d.
Hand-colored lithograph, 11 1/4 x 17 1/4 inches
Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes University, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert L. Mayock and W. Graham Arader, III
15. George Catlin (1796-1872)
Buffalo Hunt, Under the White Wolf Skin, 1832-33
Hand-colored lithograph, 12 3/16 x 17 9/16 inches
Catlin del.; on Stone by McGahey; Day & Haghe lith. to the Queen
Sordoni Family Collection
16. Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900)
In the Andes, 1878
Oil on canvas, 15 x 22 inches
The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio
17. Thomas Cole (1801-1848)
Adirondack Landscape, c. 1825-40
Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 inches
Collection of Everhart Museum
18. Thomas Davies (c. 1737-1812)
Niagara Falls from Below, c. 1766
Watercolor on paper, 13 1/2 x 20 5/8 inches,
The New York Historical Society, New York; Abbott and Foster-Jarvis funds, 1954, 1954.3
19. Seth Eastman (1808-1875)
Indian Burial, 1847
Oil on canvas, 33 x 25 inches
The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma
20. George Heriot (1766-1844)
Calumet Dance, 1799
Watercolor on paper, 8 3/8 x 13 inches
The Art Gallery of Windsor collection. Purchased by special subscription and with the assistance of The Canada Council, 1967.
21. George Heriot (1766-1844)
Ceremonial Scalp Dance, c. 1804-05
Watercolor on paper, 8 1/4 x 12 3/4 inches
The Art Gallery of Windsor collection. Purchased by special subscription and with the assistance of The Canada Council, 1967.
22. Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874)
Pursuit of a Grisly [sic] *Bear in the Black Hills Near Fort Laramie* [sic], n.d.
Ink sepia with pencil on paper, 7 3/4 x 7 1/8 inches
University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.
Gift of Olga N. Sheldon, 1973. U-3295.
23. Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874)
Pursuit, 1837
Wash, ink and Chinese white on paper, 17 1/4 x 22 inches
The Rockwell Museum, Corning, New York
24. Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874)
War-Ground, 1837
Wash, ink, and Chinese white on paper, 14 5/8 x 18 3/4 inches
The Rockwell Museum, Corning, New York

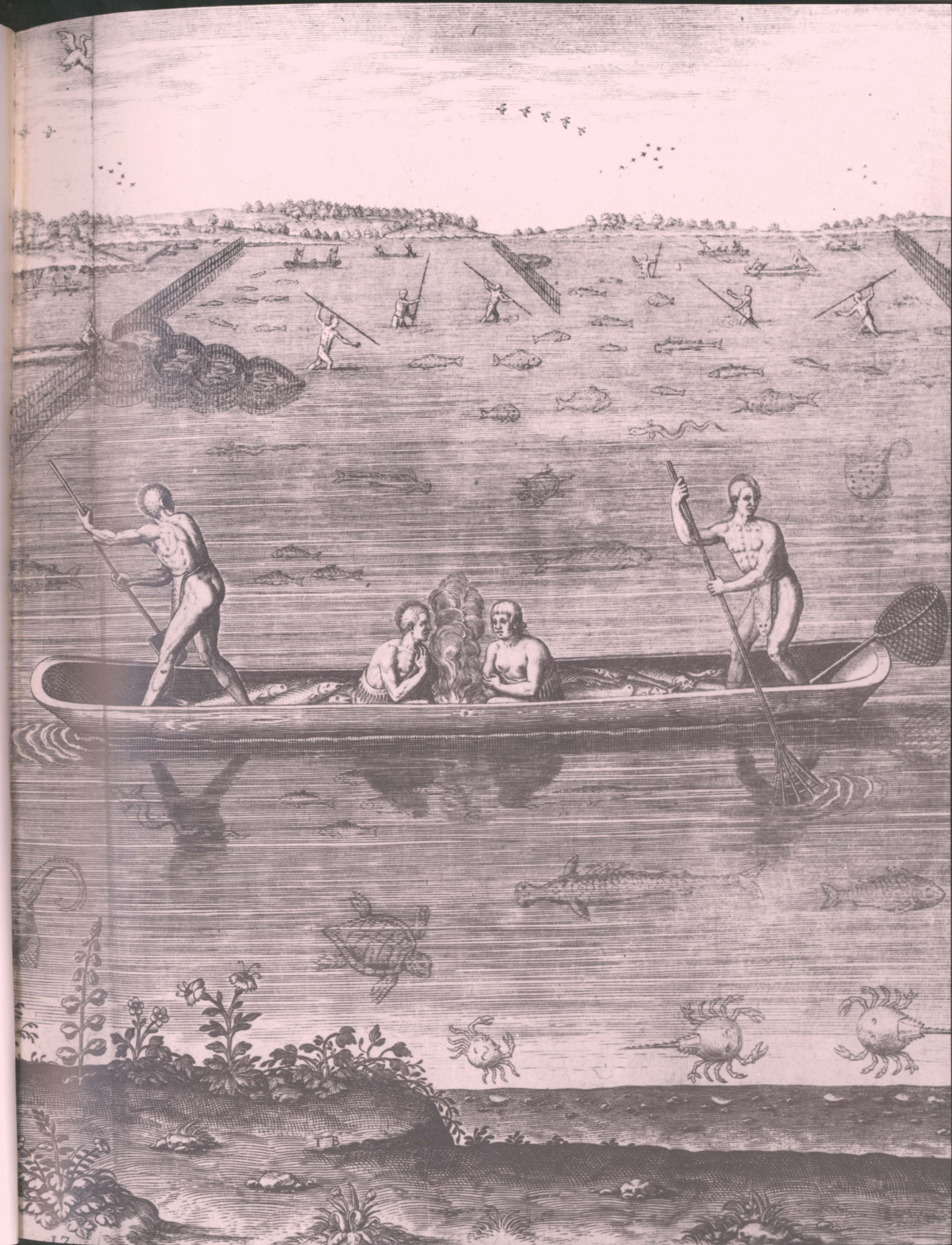
25. Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
The Towers of Tower Falls, 1872
Watercolor on paper, 10 1/2 x 7 7/8 inches
The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma
26. Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885)
Indian breast work on the river Platte, July, 1820
Watercolor on paper, 21.5 cm x 16.4 cm (8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches)
American Philosophical Society
27. Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885)
Sandhill Cranes, March, 1820
Watercolor on paper, 23.2 cm x 18.6 cm (9 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches)
American Philosophical Society
28. Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885)
Yellow headed Blackbird, May, 1820
Watercolor on paper, 22.6 cm x 18.7 cm (9 x 7 1/4 inches)
American Philosophical Society
29. Peter Rindisbacher (1806-1834)
Scene in an Indian Tent, c. 1829-34
Watercolor on paper, 7 1/2 x 8 inches
Courtesy of the West Point Museum, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York
30. Peter Rindisbacher (1806-1834)
Chippewa Mode of Travelling in the Spring and Summer, c. 1830
Watercolor on paper, 6 1/4 x 10 inches
Courtesy of the West Point Museum, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York
31. Peter Rindisbacher (1806-1834)
Cheppewa [sic] *Mode of Travelling in the Winter*, c. 1830
Watercolor on paper, 6 1/4 x 10 inches
Courtesy of the West Point Museum, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York
32. Samuel Seymour (fl. 1797-1823)
View at the Base of the Rockies, c. 1820
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper, 5 x 7 7/8 inches
The Rockwell Museum, Corning, New York
33. John Mix Stanley (1814-1872)
Snake River, Idaho and Washington
Oil on canvas, 36 1/2 x 54 inches
Courtesy of Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York
34. Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910)
Cattle Grazing Along the Platte, 1871
Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 32 inches
Museum of Nebraska Art
35. James Wilkins (1808-1888)
Covered Wagons in the Rockies, 1854
Oil on canvas, 22 x 30 inches
From the Collections of the Missouri Historical Society

Photo credits:
Curtis Salonic: 1, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15
Saltmarche, Toronto: 20, 21
James O. Milmo, 1991: 23, 24, 32

The Sordoni Art Gallery of Wilkes University was established in 1973 to encourage and support an appreciation of the visual arts in an academic setting. Founded in memory of Senator Andrew J. Sordoni, the gallery is supported by Wilkes University; the Sordoni Foundation, Inc.; the Friends of the Gallery; and other corporate, private, and government grants. Representing more than the fine arts aspect of a liberal arts education, the gallery is also a resource for the greater community of Northeastern Pennsylvania. All exhibitions are open to the public without charge.



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Wilkes University

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WILKES UNIVERSITY PRESENTS STUDENT SERVICE AND MERIT AWARDS

EDITORS PLEASE NOTE THE STUDENTS FROM YOUR AREA AND THEIR AWARD

WILKES-BARRE-- Wilkes University recently honored more than 40 students at the annual Student Awards Luncheon held in the student nightclub "Rumours" in the lower level of the Arnaud C. Marts Sports and Conference Center. The students were honored for their service to Wilkes and the community.

Photo : The students and their awards are as follows: Front row seated from left : Andrea M. Silvi, Swoyersville, Who's Who; Melissa Crosbie, Exeter, Who's Who; Christine Cardello, Effort, Who's Who; Charlotte A. Hoffman, Weatherly, Who's Who; Shawn Kolb, Tobyhanna, Student Government Appreciation and Who's Who Awards; Lori Truman, Carbondale, Who's Who and Student Government Appreciation; and Kathleen Flaim, West Hazleton, Student Government Appreciation and Who's Who Awards.

Second row, from left: Catherine Heaman, White Haven, Who's Who Award; Susan S. Draus, Wilkes-Barre Township, Who's Who Award; Loretta Carnival, Cinnaminson, New Jersey, Coreen Santoro Memorial

-MORE-

1ST ADD WILKES PRESENTS STUDENT MERIT AND SERVICE AWARDS

Award and Who's Who; Lori Fuller, Dallas, Who's Who; Suzanne
Trosko, Harrisburg, Student Government and Who's Who Award; JoAnn
Jones, Mountaintop, Who's Who; Ana Guzman, Pennsauken, New Jersey,
Who's Who; Becky Steinberger, West Pittston, Who's Who; Diana
Whalley, Gillette, New Jersey, Who's Who ; and Gina Lupini,
Jessup, Student Government and Who's Who Awards.

Third row, from left: Lindsey Krivenko, Dallas, Who's Who
Award; Ron Rainey, Newark, Delaware, Who's Who; T.R. Andrade,
Endicott, New York, Who's Who Award; Takehiko Serai, Kudamatsu,
Japan, Mada Vujica Memorial Award; Todd Wiest, Herndon, Who's Who;
Frank Mitchell, West Caldwell, New Jersey, Programmer of the Year;
Thomas Whitman, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Student Government
Appreciation Award and Who's Who; and Vincent P. Socci, Askam,
Who's Who.