

PARRISH ART MUSEUM



Sheridan Lord (American, 1926–1994)
Landscape, Autumn, 1974
Oil on canvas. 40 x 70 inches
Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY



Samuel Colman (American, 1832–1920)
Farmyard, East Hampton, L. I., ca. 1885
Oil on canvas, 16 1/8 x 27 inches
Gift of Walter Knight Sturges

American Landscapes: Treasures from the Parrish Art Museum

September 27, 2009 to November 29, 2009

The Parrish collection has long been known for its impressive array of landscape paintings and this exhibition marks an important opportunity to bring together these treasured works in a display that traces the progression of American landscape painting, from the Hudson River School to the American Impressionists, from the early Modernists to contemporary painters, all of whom contributed to the creation of a vision which we have come to think of as distinctly American. From majestic views to intimate glimpses, these paintings abound in images that frame the way we look at nature and we are drawn to these works for the descriptive way in which they evoke the natural world.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, artists of the Hudson River School were among the first to record the 'New Eden' that was the North American continent. In scaling the heights and framing the long distance into the wilderness, artists like Asher B. Durand and Thomas Doughty were inventing a new vision of history. By the middle of the century, the border on the wilderness had been pushed farther and farther west and the rise of industrialization had begun to transform the topography of the eastern United States; paintings like Samuel Colman's *Farmyard, East Hampton* evoke a pre-industrial past and nostalgia for a vanishing rural scene.

For many young Americans studying art in the decades following the Civil War, making a trip to Europe was an imperative and their choice of landscape subject matter reflected and increased awareness of European painting techniques, both the naturalism of the French Barbizon painters and the optical effects of the French Impressionists. Among them were William Lamb Picknell, William Stanley Haseltine,

and William Merritt Chase. Whether for a visit or for an extended stay, Europe was the place to which American artists often looked for instruction and inspiration and the Parrish collection boasts a wide array of works by these American artists working abroad. By the 1890s, when John Henry Twachtman set up his easel at Niagara's Horseshoe Falls, the stakes were high: could an American artist after the Hudson River School create a painting that would invoke the grandeur of this national icon without resorting to a nostalgic look back? His intimate vision of this natural wonder, Horseshoe Falls, Niagara, answers with a resounding affirmative.

The growing economic prosperity of the 1880s and 90s saw the rise of the Gilded Age resort and artists like Childe Hassam in Connecticut, John Sloan on the Gloucester coast, and Henry and Edith Prellwitz on the North Fork of Long Island, were quick to join the annual migration, often establishing their own artists' colonies and summer schools. For many artists the narrowly defined view of immediate surroundings, virtually the scene from one's own backyard, was not a limitation but a continually renewable source, ripe for painterly investigation. John Marin, Grandma Moses, Nicolai Cikovsky, Ernest Fiene and Sheridan Lord are all artists who found inspiration close to home and never seem to have found a limitation in this outlook. In the twentieth century, Long Island's East End has continued to attract artists drawn by the beauty of its land and shore. Four artists who ventured to Long Island's South Fork in the 1950s and 60s—Fairfield Porter, Jane Wilson, Jane Freilicher and Alex Katz—became part of a long tradition of artists who came to paint and stayed to build on the rich artistic heritage of East End landscape painting and the idea of place. Works in the collection by contemporary artists engaged in this ongoing tradition include Jennifer Bartlett, April Gornik, Mary Heilmann, and Robert Harms.

American Landscapes: Treasures from the Parrish Art Museum is organized by Alicia Longwell, Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Chief Curator at the Parrish. The exhibition, its catalogue and accompanying programs are made possible, in part, by generous grants from the Henry Luce Foundation, the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, Lynne and Richard Pasculano, Norman and Liliane Peck, the Herman Goldman Foundation, and Allison Morrow.

A portion of the Museum's programs is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.