

Brandywine River Museum

A Museum of Regional and American Art

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***American Etchers Abroad, 1880-1939* addresses significant, often overlooked artistic movement**

June 3–September 4, 2006

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JPG publicity images available on request

Chadds Ford, PA —The Brandywine River Museum is pleased to present *American Etchers Abroad, 1880-1939*, a national traveling exhibition of prints organized by the Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas. *American Etchers Abroad*, organized by Reed Anderson, a KU doctoral candidate in art history, opens June 3, and will remain on view through September 4, 2006.

The Brandywine River Museum is the first venue besides the Spencer to present this exhibition. Steve Goddard, curator of prints and drawings at the Spencer, says the exhibition offers a unique opportunity to view rich examples of an important movement in American art that has until now received little attention. In 1998 the Spencer Museum of Art received from an anonymous donor a large and remarkable collection of prints that was particularly strong in American etchings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of the works featured in the exhibition are drawn from this collection, and it is a special pleasure to share them with the public. More recent acquisitions to the Spencer's collection, such as Frank Duveneck's stunning *The Rialto*, also are included.

A fully illustrated catalogue, written by Reed Anderson, accompanies the exhibition and has received enthusiastic support from independent scholars, art historians, and print connoisseurs. Generously funded by Dr. Marilyn Stokstad and the Kansas University Endowment Fund, the publication documents not only some of the recent additions to the Spencer's collection, but also an important yet overlooked episode in the history of American printmaking.

Anderson explains that beginning in the early 1880s an ever-increasing number of American artists, many of whom were drawn to the graphic art of etching, set out for foreign lands. Their wide-ranging sojourns coincided with the etching revival in the United States, which arguably began with the founding of the New York Etchers Club in May 1877. The preference these artists afforded etching was due in part to the popular belief that the medium, because of its similarities to the sketch, was especially conducive to capturing the creative spirit as it emerged from the imagination of the artist. With etching tools in hand, these artists descended on Europe, Asia, and North Africa, and recorded their singular impressions of the sites they visited and the people they encountered in many exceptional cityscapes, landscapes, seascapes, genre scenes, portraits, and even an occasional still life. This unprecedented wanderlust and predilection for documenting the experiences of distant places on a copper plate remained strong until the late 1930s, having been passed on to the succeeding generation of American etchers.

The exhibition features 60 prints by 32 American artists who undertook this artistic pilgrimage. Spanning almost 50 years of artistic production, *American Etchers Abroad, 1880-1939* examines not only the artists' various motivations for traveling abroad but also some of the important dynamics that led them to document their experiences in etchings. Among these factors were the etching revivals in France and Great Britain, the unprecedented market for etchings in the United States in the late 19th century, the collapse of the market at the close of the century, and etching's glorious renaissance in the opening decades of the 20th century.

In addition to highlighting prints by such celebrated expatriates as Mary Cassatt, Joseph Pennell, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *American Etchers Abroad, 1880-1939* trains a much-deserved spotlight on the achievements of many currently under-

appreciated artists—printmakers like John Taylor Arms, Samuel Chamberlain, and Louis Rosenberg, who specialized in architectural motifs, as well as etchers such as Thomas Handforth, Lester Hornby, and Herman Armour Webster, who exhibited a particular fondness for people and genre subjects. Although the artists included in the exhibition represent only a fraction of those to go abroad during this time, their journeys and their visual travel records add a fascinating chapter to the history of American art.

Programming for *American Etchers Abroad, 1880-1939*:

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For more information on these events, contact Mary W. Cronin, Brandywine River Museum Supervisor of Education, mcronin@brandywine.org