

STILL-LIFES AND NATURE STUDIES

*from the George J. McDonald collection*

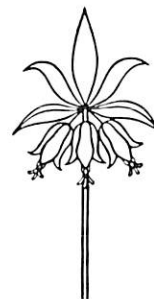


Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation

STILL-LIFES AND NATURE STUDIES  
*from the George J. McDonald collection*

16 April to 15 June 1984

James J. White and George J. McDonald



Hunt Institute  
for Botanical Documentation  
Carnegie-Mellon University  
Pittsburgh 1984

## INTRODUCTION

George J. McDonald of Washington, D.C. has quietly gathered what he refers to as his “nickel-and-dime” or “shoestring” collection of mostly American paintings and drawings, assembled between 1960 and 1980. His modesty notwithstanding, this little-known collection is a remarkable achievement, but one that, until this exhibition, has been an enjoyment to the collector and his friends alone. On numerous occasions I’ve seen George enthusiastically show his paintings—always at others’ requests—tilting a nearby lamp or even removing the painting from the wall to illuminate a particular feature. More than one admirer has left to begin his own small collection.

When asked “Why did you concentrate on still-lives?,” George tells of his own inspiration from a chance viewing of the William H. Gerdts collection in Newark about 1960. Soon afterward he began collecting paintings around Washington and on trips to his home state of Rhode Island. Still-lives were available and usually within his means, though he once had to decide between a new raincoat and a painting (and chose the painting).

The first oil painting that George acquired was a portrait of a boy with a hoop, *ca.* 1845, which was later reproduced in The Old Print Shop’s *Portfolio* for May 1964. Within several months he had purchased his first still-life (no. 25), from Norton Asner, a veteran dealer in Baltimore. A second one (no. 26), signed “[M.?] J. Scaman N.Y. 1864” and acquired a month later in the same shop, turned out to be a mate to the first. Many of the other paintings in the collection came from the great dealers Sara Andrews, the late Anthony Olivo, and Ben and Jean Lemon.

After receiving a degree in International Relations from Brown University, George worked for the Census Bureau in both New York and Washington. Later he held positions in the Office of Education and the U. S. Postal Service. Upon an early retirement in the mid-1970s, George opened an art gallery in Washington, but he kept private the works shown here, with the exception of a few sold from his collection and graciously lent to us by the new owners.

*Art is the demonstration that the ordinary is extraordinary.*

Amédée Ozenfant

*It is the treating of the commonplace with the feeling of the sublime that gives to art its true power.*

J. F. Millet



In assembling this exhibition, we have selected from the still-lives, nature studies and animal paintings in the collection. The works chosen include a generous sampling by New England artists, particularly of the Providence, Fall River and Springfield still-life schools: George Whitaker, Edward C. Leavitt, J. C. Spencer, Bryant Chapin, Abbie Luella Zuill and Jonas Joseph La Valley. When asked which is his favorite painting, George is quick to name Whitaker's "The fruit of our garden in the country — study" (no. 36), from the collector's home state. He also has a special fondness for the watercolor by E. English (no. 12), one of the earliest works in the collection.

*Science and art have that in common that everyday things seem to them new and attractive.*

Claude Bernard

When we asked George if he would be willing to lend some of his paintings for an exhibition at the Institute, he not only agreed but has been enthusiastically helpful in many aspects of its preparation, for all of which we are most grateful. We also express our appreciation to those who have lent paintings that George owned previously and admired especially — to Dorothy G. Bender of Washington, D.C. for a most handsome still-life by the well-known Belgian painter de Noter (no. 24); to Charles A. Nicholls of Washington, D.C. for two beautiful paintings by La Valley (no. 19) and Zuill (no. 38); and to Berry B. Tracy of Goshen, New York for a superb painting of grapes by A. J. H. Way, Baltimore's leading nineteenth-century still-life painter (no. 35).

*J.J.W.*



## CATALOGUE

### F. L. Aldens

American, 19th century

- 1 Four chestnuts 1869  
oil on paper, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ "

### Charles Armor

American, 1844-?

- 2 Hanging grapes by window 1886  
oil on canvas, 20" x 14"

Other works by Armor can be found in the U.S. Capitol and Department of Interior.

### Clara Maxfield Arnold

American, late 19th-early 20th century

- 3 Two chicks 1913  
watercolor on paper, 7" x 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ "

Arnold was a Providence painter known for her oils and watercolors of flowers and fruit.

### Charles Baum (attr. to)

American, 1812-1877

- 4 Peaches and grapes  
oil on canvas, 30" x 20"

A still-life and landscape painter, Baum immigrated from Germany to the United States around 1850. He exhibited between 1852 and 1864 and, between 1867 and 1869, maintained studios in both Egg Harbor, New Jersey and Philadelphia.

### E. Bogart

American, 19th century

- 5 Compote with peaches and grapes 1868  
pastel on paper, 17" x 21"

### Bryant Chapin

American, 1859-1927

- 6 Five apples 1899  
oil on canvas, 12" x 16"  
7 Six plums 1907  
oil on canvas, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ "



- 8 Strawberries and basket 1903  
oil on canvas, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

Chapin was one of the teachers of the Fall River school—named after Fall River, Massachusetts—which flourished from 1865 until about 1925.

### Thomas Cromwell Corner

American, 1865-1938

- 9 Vase of white roses  
oil on wood panel, 18" x 12"

Corner was born in Baltimore and was a pupil of J. Alden Weir. He is represented in the Virginia State Library collection, Richmond, by a large portrait of Governor F. W. Mackey Holliday (1897), presently hanging in the General Assembly Building.

### P. Dieffenbach

American?, 19th century

- 10 Apples and pears 1879  
oil on artist's board, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

- 11 Apples 1862  
oil on artist's board, 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

The only reference to this artist we have seen is a photograph of another painting in The Old Print Shop, Inc., New York.





### E. English

American, early 19th century

12 Basket of flowers  
watercolor on paper, 13" x 15"

### Frances Elliot Gifford

American, 1844-?

13 Jug and apples  
oil on canvas, 12" x 18"  
lent by James J. White

This still-life, by the wife of artist Robert Swain Gifford, was exhibited in the Smithsonian Institution's "1876: A Centennial Exhibition." Mrs. Gifford was a painter of birds and a magazine illustrator.

### C. de G.

French?, 19th century

14 Peaches and grapes  
pastel on paper, 21½" x 17⅞"

The artist may have been Mademoiselle de Girardot, whose simpler painting (donated in 1832) is in the Musée Crozatier, Le Puy, France.

### S. E. Hahn

American, 19th century

15 Bough of apples 1889  
oil on canvas, 36" x 22"

### Anna Eliza Hardy

American, 1839-1934

16 Hollyhocks  
oil on canvas, 25½" x 13½"  
lent by James J. White

Hardy, a Maine painter of fruit and flowers, was a pupil of Abbott H. Thayer in Boston.

### George W. Horlor

British, exhibited 1849-1890

17 "Black Dose—The Man Eater" 1852  
oil on canvas, 20" x 26"

Horlor was an animal painter who exhibited frequently at the Royal Academy. On reverse: Bought of Capt. Price, given to James White.



**Julia S. Kahn**

American, 1875-1934?

18 Bugle and drum  
oil on canvas, 42" x 28"

**Jonas Joseph La Valley**

American, 1858-1930

19 Currants  
oil on canvas, 7" x 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
lent by Charles A. Nicholls, Washington, D.C.

The George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum in Springfield, Massachusetts exhibited "The Fruits of Every Season: The Life and Works of Jonas Joseph LaValley" (1982), including his best known work "The Birth of Springfield." La Valley was a member of the Springfield School.

**Edward Chalmers Leavitt**

American, 1842-1904

20 Strawberries 1905  
oil on canvas, 6" x 12"

21 Three fish on grassy bed 1896  
oil on canvas, 20" x 30"

One of the best known painters in Providence, Rhode Island in the late 19th century, Leavitt was noted for his oils of fruits and flowers.

**Raoul M. de Longpré fils**

French/American?, late 19th century?

22 Lilacs  
watercolor on paper, 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
lent by James J. White

This obscure painter of lilacs and roses is often confused with and may or may not be related to Paul de Longpré (b. France 1855, d. Hollywood 1911).

**Emile van Marcke de Lummen**

French, 1827-1890

23 Cows and shepherd  
oil on wood panel, 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" x 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"

Van Marcke ranked among the best animal painters, receiving medals at the Paris Salon as early as 1867. Bénézit notes the harmonious compositions of his cow and landscape paintings.

**David Emil Joseph de Noter**

Belgian, 1825-?

24 Fruits, flowers and vegetables  
oil on wood panel, 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" x 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
lent by Dorothy G. Bender, Washington, D.C.

De Noter exhibited in the Paris Salon and in Brussels in the 1850s. Le Musée de Breslau (Poland) owns one of his still-lives.



**[M.?] J. Scaman**

American, 19th century

25 Cantaloupe and fruit [1864]

oil on canvas, 12" x 12"

26 Watermelon and fruit 1864

oil on canvas, 12" x 12"

Scaman added "N.Y." after his signature.

**John Clinton Spencer**

American, 1861-1919

27 Hanging game 1902

oil on canvas, 40" x 18"

28 Hanging pheasants 1909

oil on canvas, 22" x 14"

24



29 Squirrel 1907

oil on canvas, 14" x 22"

30 Lobster and lettuce 1902

oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

31 Orange, grapes, chestnuts and nuts 1901

oil on canvas, 7" x 12"

32 Clams and seaweed

oil on canvas, 10" x 14"

lent by James J. White

Spencer, a Providence painter who exhibited oils of fruits and flowers, studied under Edward Leavitt.

**L. P. Spinner**

American, late 19th century

33 The fish dinner

oil on canvas, 26½" x 40"

**George Stevens**

British, 1810-1865

34 Compote with fruit 1858

oil on artist's board, 24" x 20"

**Andrew John Henry Way**

American, 1826-1888

35 Hanging grapes

oil on canvas, 24" x 18"

lent by Berry B. Tracy

Way, who studied in Baltimore, was awarded a medal for his panels of grapes at the Philadelphia Centennial, 1876.

**George William Whitaker**

American, 1840-1916

36 "The fruit of our garden in the country—study"

oil on canvas, 12" x 16¼"

37 Peaches, melons and wine bottle

oil on canvas, 21" x 17"

As a youth, Whitaker was influenced by George Inness and the Hudson River School. Referred to as the "Dean of Providence Painters," he played an important role in founding the Rhode Island School of Design.



**Abbie Luella Zuill**

American, 1856-1921

**38 Strawberries**

oil on canvas, 6" x 8"

lent by Charles A. Nicholls, Washington, D.C.

A member of the Fall River School, Zuill was taught by Robert Dunning.

**Unknown**

American, 19th century

**39 Five green apples on pewter plate**

oil on artist's board, 9¾" x 9¾"

**Unknown**

American, 19th century

**40 Pear and peach**

oil on artist's board, 6" x 9"

**Unknown**

American, mid- to late 19th century

**41 Polar bears with captured seal**

oil on canvas, 24½" x 35"

**Unknown**

American, 19th century

**42 Strawberries**

oil on canvas, 8" x 10⅛"

**Unknown**

American, 19th century

**43 Vase of callas**

oil on canvas, 21" x 14½"

lent by James J. White



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The two mahogany pier tables in the gallery are also from the McDonald collection. One is Baltimore, ca. 1825-1830, 19" x 43" x 36", with grey marble top and acanthus-carved cyma-scrolled supports on platform base with lion's-paw feet. The other is Duncan Phyfe, New York City, 1825, 18" x 42" x 37¼", with reeded-edge white marble top, mirrored back, ormolu caps and bases, and verde antique acanthus-carved feet.



