

Meet the Masters

February Program

George Bellows “Love of Winter”

John Singer Sargent “Oyster Gatherers of Cancale”

About the Artist:

About the Artwork:

(See the following pages)

Topics for Discussion:

1. Compare these two paintings, where do you think the artist was when viewing this scene?
2. How do you feel when you look at these two paintings?
3. Which artist used warm colors (reds, yellows, oranges) and which used cool colors (blues, greens and violets)?
4. Does each artist depict people in different ways?
5. Which artist used more detail and which artist painted broad areas of color?
6. Notice the thick paint application by both artists.
7. Which painting is a winter scene? How can you tell?
8. What is the weather like in each of these paintings? How can you tell?
9. Can you think of a story that these paintings might be telling?

Hands-on Art Activity: Paint an Afternoon Scene -Choose a Season of the Year

Materials: Canvas board (app. 9”x12”)
Pencil
Acrylic paints
Palettes (paper plates work well)
Variety of small to medium brushes
Water tubs
Newspaper to protect tables
Paper towels

1. Choose a favorite season of the year and think of a story you could tell with people doing an activity together.
2. Draw a sketch on paper first to develop your idea. This is only a sketch, so it does not have to be “perfect”. Do not spend too much time on the sketch.
3. Transfer sketch to the board.
4. Carefully paint the scene. Mix the colors in small batches and be careful to keep your colors bright.
5. Acrylics are have a heavy, thick consistency so a little water will help with mixing colors and will make the paint flow better.
6. Be sure to paint the entire background
7. Make sure your name is on the front.

John Singer Sargent

Sargent was born in Italy to American parents, studied in Paris and eventually settled in England. His cosmopolitan background encouraged an urbane style most commonly revealed in his numerous portraits of fashionable society. In 1880, he visited Spain where Hals and Velasquez were important to the development of his considerable technical facility. He studied in Paris for ten years, leaving in 1884 after his Salon portrait of Madame Gautreau was criticized for its sexually provocative nature.' The following year, Sargent founded the New English Art Club in London.

"Oyster Gatherers of Concale", with its atmospheric haze, is an example of a painting in which Sargent emulated the light effects of the French Impressionists. While admired for its technical mastery, his work is often seen only as superficially impressive. Aside from his portraits, he painted some remarkable landscapes, as well as murals of buildings in Boston and in 1918, a huge, tragic painting entitled "Gassed" as part of his role as an official war artist..



George Bellows
American, 1881-1925
Love of Winter, 1914
Oil on canvas
Friends of American Art Collection (1914.1018)

George Bellows was famous in his home town of Columbus, Ohio, and at Ohio State University as a baseball star. By the time he was a junior, the Cincinnati Reds were after him, but when one of his friends asked him if he was going to be a professional baseball player, he replied, "No, I'm going to be an artist," and soon thereafter he packed his bags and left for New York City.

Bellows was fascinated by the fast pace of New York life. He painted everything he saw, ordinary people as they worked and played, knockouts in the boxing ring, slum kids, circus performers. Here, we see a colorful crowd skating on a frozen pond in Central Park. Where are the two fancy skaters? Notice how Bellows's quick long brushstrokes give a sensation of movement, wind, and speed.

In 1913, Bellows attended the Armory exhibition in New York, the first major show in this country of work by Matisse, Kandinsky, and other painters working at the same time in Paris. Bellows was electrified by these artists' use of color, and in this 1914 painting he experimented with a palette of red-purple, red-orange, yellow, and blue. Which of these colors expresses the wintry chill of this skating scene?

Bellows was a successful artist and also a very devoted family man. He painted many portraits of his wife, Emma, and two daughters. He also loved to include them in other pictures. When he painted *Love of Winter*, his first daughter Anne was three-and-a-half years old. Which figures in the painting might be Emma and Anne?

In 1919, Bellows taught the fall term at the School of the Art Institute, bombarding his students with his ideas on painting such as, "You don't know what you are able to do until you try it. Try everything that can be done." Bellows kept trying everything, and gave us unforgettable pictures of American life.

© 1991 The Art Institute of Chicago



George Bellows

Love of Winter, 1914

Oil on canvas; 81.4 x 101.6 cm



In a letter dated January 15, 1914, George Bellows lamented to a friend, "There has been none of my favorite snow. I must paint the snow at least once a year." Receiving his much-wished-for snowfall just one month later, the painter executed this vigorous scene of skaters and onlookers assembled in New York City's Central Park.

Here, Bellows skillfully counterpointed the background of the composition, an expanse of blue-gray hills and trees, with the boldly colored and vigorously rendered figures in the fore- and middle grounds. A pendant to *Love of Winter*,

titled *A Day in June* (The Detroit Institute of Arts), exhibits a similar composition. At the center of the Chicago canvas is a mother and child (perhaps the artist's wife, Emma, and daughter Anne), who, with the nearby women and children, function to offset the horizontal line of swiftly moving skaters behind them. Painted in contrasting colors and moving in opposite directions (the child turns abruptly back toward the skaters), the two figures add a note of dissonance to the otherwise harmonious scene.

A student of the influential teacher and painter Robert Henri, Bellows produced his first view of Central Park in 1905 and, in 1907, his first work

on the subject for which he is best known: the boxing match. With Henri and six other painters, he participated in a now-famous 1908 exhibition featuring realistic works often focused on gritty aspects of New York City street life. For this reason, some members of this group, which was dubbed "The Eight," later became known as the "Ashcan painters." While *Love of Winter* is a definitely picturesque urban scene, it does feature the kind of lively action that Henri and his peers favored.