

The Art Institute of Chicago

Art at the Time of the Centennial

Author(s): Milo M. Naeve

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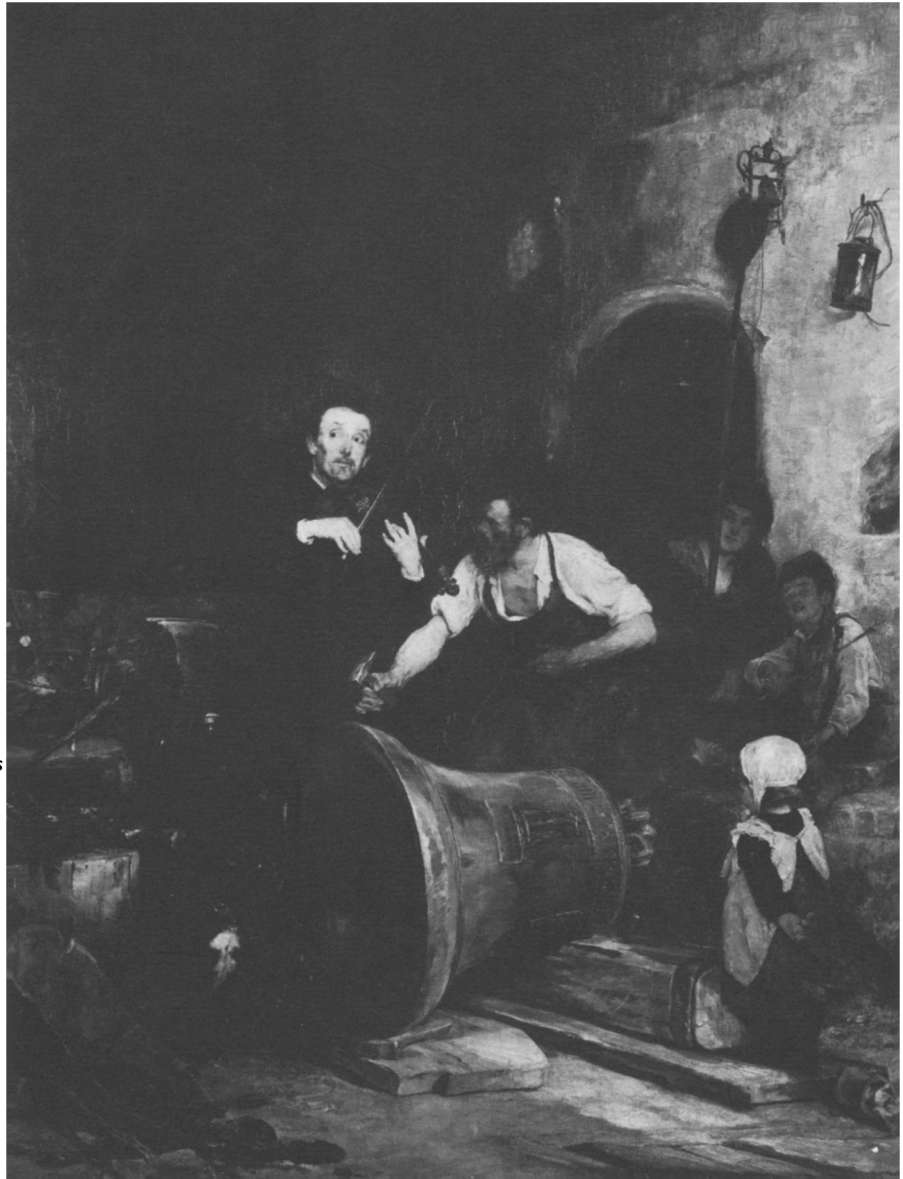
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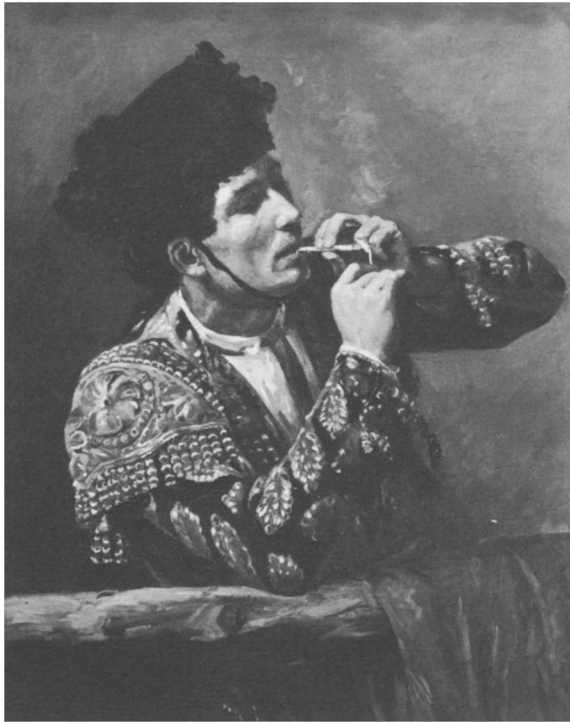
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*Walter Shirlaw, United States
1838-1909
Toning of the Bell, 1874
Oil on Canvas, 40x30
Friends of American Art
Collection, 1938.1280*



Mary Cassatt, *United States 1844-1926*
Torero, 1873
 Oil on Canvas, 32¼x25¼
 Bequest of Mrs. Sterling Morton, 1969.332

The Art Institute is typical in many ways of the modern museum developing in the United States during the late nineteenth century. Its holdings in particular reflect the new movements of the 1870's and the drift of American taste toward France instead of England. The arts of the Impressionists, which were not represented at Philadelphia in 1876, are one strength of our collections. Japanese art, critical to the new vision of the West, was an early interest at The Art Institute and is represented in the exhibition.

Official taste of the centennial era survives in few institutions, let alone The Art Institute. But the collections do include one painting by an American that hung in the centennial exhibition at Philadelphia and represents conservative standards of the day, Walter Shirlaw's *Toning of the Bell*. It is symbolic of the reversal of American standards from 1876 to 1976 that this painting hangs in our exhibition with that of another American, Thomas Eakins: officials at the Philadelphia exhibition declined his entry for the art section and placed it in the medical.

MILO M. NAEVE
 Curator American Arts

Exhibitions of contemporary art were a significant feature of the celebration Americans held at Philadelphia in 1876 commemorating the centennial of the American Revolution. Great Britain provided the largest representation from abroad, and her arts received the greatest praise. Among the Americans, George Inness was but one conspicuous omission. How differently we assess that period today.

Art at the Time of the Centennial is drawn from the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago. Concentrating on the decade of the 1870's, it suggests directions in the arts during a period of decisive change. One era in painting of the Western world was closing with the death of two leaders of the Barbizon school, Francois Millet and Camille Corot, in 1875; another era was opening with the first Impressionist exhibition held in 1874. The sculptural revolution effected by Auguste Rodin did not reach full force until later, but in the decorative arts a new appreciation of craftsmanship and functional design began to engage English and American taste in contrast to the prevailing eclecticism.

on the front cover:

Jacques Henri Lartigue, born 1896
Grand Prix of the Automobile Club of France, 1912
 photograph from portfolio issued in 1972, 16.9x23.1 cm.
 Helen Harvey Mills, restricted gift in memory of
 Kathleen W. Harvey, 1974.222h

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