



EVERSON MUSEUM OF ART

**EDUCATOR PACKET**

*FROM NEW YORK TO CORRYMORE:  
ROBERT HENRI AND IRELAND*  
**February 11, 2012 – May 13, 2012**



Robert Henri, *West Coast of Ireland*, 1913, Oil on canvas, 26 x 32", Everson Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, 58.6. Photography by David Revette Photography

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# **Compiled by the Education Department**

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# INTRODUCTION

Provided by the Mint Museum

Robert Henri (1865-1929) is one of the most important and influential American artists of the twentieth century. He is celebrated for his bold, penetrating portraits, for being a dynamic, inspirational teacher to countless students, and for leading the group of urban realists known as The Eight. Because of his deep connections to Philadelphia and New York City, Henri is often considered a painter of distinctly American subjects, yet he possessed a deep love of travel and created significant bodies of work during trips to France, Holland, Spain, and especially, Ireland.



Robert Henri at Corrymore

Henri (pronounced Hen-rye) first visited Ireland in 1913. His decision to go there was likely prompted by factors including family connections to the country, his friendship with the Irish expatriate John Butler Yeats, and a belief that Ireland would provide him with an engaging group of inspirational, authentic models untainted by modern life. 1913 was also the year of the landmark Armory Show: the controversial exhibition of modern art that introduced the American public to the work of Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Marcel Duchamp, among others. These artists' bold colors and fragmented forms made the work of Henri—who had been considered one of America's leading progressive artists—look almost conservative by comparison. Following the Armory Show, it is not surprising that Henri looked for a quiet, rural setting in which he could reassess his place in the artistic landscape and begin a fresh body of work.

Henri and his wife Marjorie discovered the ruggedly beautiful Achill Island during a tour of Ireland in the summer of 1913. This mountainous island, located off the country's northwest coast, is small (its total area is just 57 square miles), sparsely populated, and dotted with patches of heather, turf bogs, and small lakes. They decided to stay on Achill in part because they were able to rent a sprawling estate named Corrymore, which provided



Corrymore

Henri with ample studio space, and in part because of the availability of models in the area. Henri relished the remoteness and the simple way of life that the island provided. He and Marjorie returned to Achill in 1924, when they were able to purchase Corrymore, and lived there for several months every summer until his death in 1929.

## Henri and Children

Although not a father himself, Henri enjoyed painting children. During his early years in New York he painted a few child subjects, but on a trip to Holland in 1907 he became more engaged with painting young models, a practice that he continued during his subsequent travels to Spain and the Western United States. It was in Ireland, however, that Henri painted children most consistently.



**Young Robert Henri**

Henri made his views on the topic clear in his book *The Art Spirit*: "If you paint children you must have no patronizing attitude toward them. Whoever approaches a child without humility, without wonderment, and without infinite respect, misses in his judgement [sic] of what is before him. . . . Paint with respect for [the child] . . . He is the great possibility, the independent individual."

Despite his admiration and respect for them, many of the island's youth were understandably shy around the Henris, as foreign visitors to Achill were a rarity. So how did this American artist, who was old enough to be a grandfather to most of his Irish models, relate to these young sitters? It turns out that he and Marjorie found a variety of ways to entertain them while they posed. The children were paid half a crown for each session, which also included perks such as listening to the artist's Victrola, snacking on tea and biscuits, and sometimes receiving a small gift or pieces of candy.

## Robert Henri and the Ashcan School

Prior to visiting Achill Island in 1913, Robert Henri established himself in American art as the leader of a group of realist artists now called the Ashcan School. Rebelling against the conservative National Academy of Design, the artists of the Ashcan School were encouraged by Henri to paint the everyday urban subjects that traditional art would ignore.

Henri's mentoring was invaluable, especially for Philadelphia newspaper illustrators John Sloan, William Glackens, Everett Shinn, and George Luks. With encouragement from Henri, these artists used the skills developed on the job, such as quick, accurate sketches and a familiarity with city life. As Henri and the other artists slowly migrated to newspapers in New York City, they continued to meet and paint with Henri as the proficient teacher.

In New York City, the Ashcan School artists and students in Henri's classes at the Arts Student League scoured the streets of New York for images to sketch and paint. In February of 1908, Henri and several other artists funded the exhibition *The Eight* at the Macbeth Galleries. This landmark show, including paintings by Henri, Sloan, Glackens, Shinn, Luks, George Bellows, Ernest Lawson, Arthur B. Davies and Maurice Prendergast, was considered the most avant-garde display of art until the Armory Show of 1913. The style of each artist differed, but all eight were united in their dedication to depicting a hopeful and thriving contemporary city life.

Henri's declaration of "art for life's sake" is well illustrated in the examples of the Ashcan School presented in this gallery. From Sloan's etchings of bohemian society to Bellows's exhausted boxers, these artists embraced American city life of the early twentieth century.

### **Illustrators as Artists**

While several artists in the Ashcan School attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, others developed their artistic skills as newspaper illustrators. Beginning in the 1890s, newspapers began to regularly include eye-catching advertisements, comics and pictures. By complimenting headlines with illustrations, both the educated and the illiterate enjoyed the sensational stories of the city.

John Sloan, William Glackens, Everett Shinn and George Luks all began their artistic careers as newspaper illustrators in Philadelphia. This training ground set the foundation for their artistic careers. When Henri encouraged fellow artists and students to use the city as inspiration for their paintings, these newspaper men could turn to their experience of drawing fires, robberies, the poor and the busy city streets. Some, such as Sloan, also relied on freelancing for newspapers, magazines and book illustrations as their main source of income.

## **Influence of the Ashcan School**

The realism represented by the Ashcan School began to lose its relevance as technology and culture outpaced the way urban life was being depicted. Between the rise of photography, the shocking modernism of the 1913 Armory Show and the transformation of the haphazard city into a sleek skyscraper landscape, the Ashcan School artists lost their contemporary edge.

The lasting influence of the Ashcan School survived through later artists who altered the definition of urban subjects to fit their needs. Two examples are Edward Hopper, who studied under Robert Henri, and Beatrice Wose-Smith, who was a student of George Luks. Both Hopper and Wose-Smith were inspired by the idea of painting the urban landscape, but each artist used their individual artistic style and approach to contemporary life in the city.

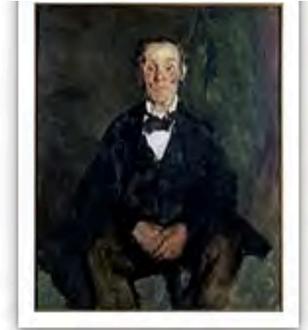
## SELECTED IMAGES



*West Coast of Ireland*, 1913  
Oil on canvas, 26 x 32", Everson Museum of Art, Museum purchase, 58.6.  
Photographed by David Revette Photography



*Corrymore*, 1913, Oil on canvas, 20 x 24", Estate of the Artist



*Guide to Croaghan (Brien O' Malley)*, 1913, Oil on canvas, 41 x 33", Cummer Gallery of Art



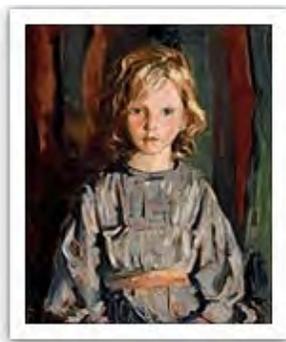
*Irish Lass*, 1913



*Tom Cafferty*, 1924, Oil on canvas, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester  
Gift of Mrs. Granger A. Hollister, 1926.1



*The Pink Pinafore (Mary Anne Cafferty)*, 1926, Oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery



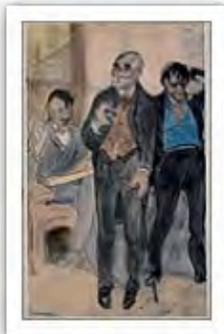
*Wee Maureen*, 1926, Oil on canvas, 24 x 20" Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



*Old Johnie (Johnie Cummings)*, 1913, Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 20 3/8", Baltimore Museum of Art



*Old Johnie's Wife*, 1913, Oil on canvas, 32 x 26", Indianapolis Museum of Art



Marjorie Organ, *Portraits of Henri, Yeats, and Sloan*, nd., Gouache, pen and black ink on paper, Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art



*Her Sunday Shawl*, 1924, Oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



*The Fisherman's Son: Thomas Cafferty*, 1925, Oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



*Winter Night, Fayette Park*, 1937, Beatrice Wose-Smith, Oil on canvas, Gift of the Wose-Smith collection, P.C.72.21



*Charleston Doorway*, 1929, Edward Hopper, Watercolor on paper, Gift of the Wose-Smith Collection P.C. 88.13



*Early Spring*, 1913-1914, Ernest Lawson, Oil on canvas, Museum purchase with funds from the Mary McMillan Fund, P.C. 58.1

## RESOURCES

### Mint Museum Wiki

[http://mintwiki.pbworks.com/w/page/27736525/From New York to Corrymore%3A Robert Henri and Ireland](http://mintwiki.pbworks.com/w/page/27736525/From%20New%20York%20to%20Corrymore%3A%20Robert%20Henri%20and%20Ireland)