2024

Maine as Modernism's Vernacular Muse: The Ogunquit Artists Colony as Microcosm for the Transition to American Modernism

Lydia C. Burke
Colby College

Maine as Modernism's Vernacular Muse: The Ogunquit Artists Colony as Microcosm for the Transition to American Modernism

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

Colby College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

Lydia Burke

Waterville, Maine

May 2024

Honors Thesis Advisor: Sarah Duff

Second Reader: Sarah Humphreville, Lunder Curator of American Art

Table of Contents

Abstract

Maine has played a vital but largely unacknowledged role in the development of American modernism as both an environmental and cultural repository of inspiration. By examining the artistic and pedagogical tensions present in the Ogunquit, Maine art colony, this thesis explores Maine as an inspiration point for many of the foundational artists and teachers of the American modernist art movement. The gap in literature addressing the question, "why Maine?" leaves a void in the scholarship of American history and art history. Setting the scope of its research within this vital question, this thesis argues that Ogunquit, Maine served as a foundational turning point within the transition from the old guard to American modernism. Artists were inspired by the landscape, vernacular architecture, and folk art found in Maine, which they found to be a welcome antidote to the rigid prescriptions of modernity and industrialization, aiding them to establish a uniquely American artistic identity.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been the most challenging yet rewarding academic undertaking of my undergraduate career. I would not have been able to get through it without the tremendous support of those around me, and for them I am eternally grateful.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Professor Sarah Duff, my thesis advisor. She has been a guiding force throughout this process, and an extremely knowledgeable sounding board for all my incongruous first drafts. I always leave our meetings with a renewed excitement for the project, and she has given me incredible direction in revision and planning this thesis. I could not have done it without her. Secondly, I would like to thank Sarah Humphreville, my internship supervisor at the Colby College Museum of Art. Her mentorship throughout my budding art career has been tremendous, and her assignment of writing an extended label for Yasuo Kuniyoshi's *Boy with Cow* sparked my interest in Ogunquit's artistic legacy. She has been an incredible guiding force throughout my last two years of college, and I owe her an incredible debt for her mentorship.

I would also like to thank the History Department and Davis Connects, who generously provided my funding to be able to travel to the Archives of American Art. My trip to Washington D.C. this January was a tremendous part of my research. Being able to look at the records and files of those who lived and studied in Ogunquit, and to see firsthand how Maine impacted them and their artistic identity was key to my project.

Lastly, thank you to my parents for supporting me, not merely with this thesis, but also for all my education. I am grateful to them especially for encouraging me to explore my passions—art and history—without ever questioning my academic decisions. I love you both and am eternally grateful for your support of my education.

Introduction: Situating Our Story

What defines modernism, specifically American modernism? Most people with little knowledge of art think of an institution like the Museum of Modern Art or the Whitney Museum of American Art, major New York institutions with canvases haphazardly splattered in paint adorning their walls. However, Modernism as a concept runs much deeper than a Jackson Pollock piece on the wall of a white cube museum. Modernism was a fundamental tension at the turn of the 20th century in the United States, an ideological battle waged on every level in every small town. The small coastal community of Ogunquit, Maine was no exception; two men waged a quiet war of wills and wits. One was named Charles H. Woodbury, a staunch conservative with no time for nonsense. The other, a free-spirited and wealthy New York heir, was named Hamilton Easter Field. Field was on an artistic mission with his Summer School of Graphic Arts, and his modernist vision would redefine art in America in the decades that followed.

In the summer of 1888, Charles H. Woodbury of Boston paid his first visit to Ogunquit while visiting his fiancée's family in nearby York Beach.[1] He was struck by Perkins Cove, drawn to its primitive simplicity. In stark contrast to the bustle of Boston, "[The] plain shacks bespoke a simple lifestyle that moved him. Like Saul's on the road to Damascus, Woodbury's spirit was stabbed broad awake by the inspiration of this typical, old-world study whose nature was dear to so many late 19th century artists."[2] And so, a decade later, Woodbury opened the Ogunquit Summer School of Painting and Drawing,[3] dedicated to a uniquely American style

[1] Louise Tragard, Patricia E. Hart, and W. L. Copithorne. *A Century of Color, 1886-1986: Ogunquit, Maine's Art Colony*. Ogunquit, Me: Barn Gallery Associates, 1987, 2.
[2] Tragard, 3.
[3] Thomas Andrew Denenberg, Amy Kurtz. Lansing, and Susan Dandly. *Call of the Coast: Art Colonies of New England*. Portland, ME: Portland Museum of Art, 2009, 66.

tinged with the influence of French impressionism.[4] The clientele of his school was largely traditional, well-to-do young women from Boston. This crowd was soon nicknamed "The Virginal Wayfarers[5]" by the locals who could sense the young women's orthodox yet ambitious sensibilities.

During the summer of 1902, the tranquility of traditionalism was disrupted in the cove, never to be regained. Hamilton Easter Field, a young Quaker from a notable New York family arrived in Ogunquit with his protégé, a young French boy named Robert Laurent.[6] Similarly drawn to the raw, primitive beauty of the landscape, Field bought up most of the land surrounding it that was not already owned by Woodbury between 1906 and 1908.[7] In 1911, Field established the Summer School of Graphic Arts, dedicated to teaching avant-garde styles such as French Fauvism and Cubism.[8]

In a recent profile on the two art colonies in Downeast Magazine, Devon Zimmerman describes the coexistence of the two camps as "Shakespearean," [9] an apt characterization of the fundamental differences between these two schools. Field, a gay modernist with a propensity for the daring and extravagant, ruffled the feathers of the comparatively conservative Woodbury. Speaking on the men's relationship, Ogunquit Heritage Museum curator Louise Tragard said, "I've never seen anything about the two of them breaking bread and opening a bottle of wine and

[4] Denenberg, 66.
[5] Tragard, 17.
[6] Wendy Jeffers, "Hamilton Easter Field: The Benefactor from Brooklyn." *Archives of American Art Journal* 50, no. 1/2 (2011), 32.
[7] Tragard, 27.
[8] Doreen Bolger, "Hamilton Easter Field and His Contribution to American Modernism." *American Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1988): 85.
[9] Will Grunewald, "How a Pair of Rivals Birthed Maine's Archetypal Art Colony." Downeast Magazine, May 2023.

talking about brush strokes. They couldn't have been more polar."[10] While there are not many detailed records about their interactions, a strained relationship emerges within the archives.

Thus, between these two schools so fundamentally different in thought, Perkins Cove became "the unlikely fault line"[11] between the old guard of Post-Impressionism and the avant-garde, bringing a physical manifestation to the ideological battleground that was happening in American modernism during the early twentieth century. As modernism evolved, so did the standard for avant-garde. Where Post-Impressionism had once been at the cutting edge of the field, it was soon overtaken by more abstract and radical art and theory. The history of this colony provides a microcosm of the switch from traditional art forms to the experimental and avant-garde art that came to dominate during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Historical Context

Presently, Maine evokes a synonymous association with the arts, a hub for culture and creatives unlike any other in New England. However, for much of American history, this vision of Maine as a site of artistic innovation has not been the case. As explained by the former Chief Curator for the Portland Museum of Art, Thomas Denenburg, "The idea of Maine as a place for creatives is a very modern one, and art colonies in general are a response to the conditions of modernity…"[12] For centuries, the state stood at a crossroads, torn between the development and industrialization of America and the unspoiled beauty of the wilderness from which this country

[10] Grunewald, "How a Pair of Rivals Birthed Maine's Archetypal Art Colony."
[11] Denenberg, 54.
[12] Brian Kevin. "What Was the Art Colony?" Downeast Magazine, May 2023.

sprang. Thus, it is vital to understand the development of the state of Maine when asking how it became so intertwined with the arts and the making of modernism.

The turning point for Maine came at the end of the nineteenth century, as railway travel made it a popular summer destination for East Coasters from New York to Boston. A popular train line ran to York Beach, bringing New England travelers to the coastlines of Maine with ease like never before. [13] Maine-born artists such as Charles Codman and Harrison Brown had taken advantage of the natural landscape, but artists who traveled to Maine to seek inspiration put it on the map as an artistic destination.[14] Ogunquit, meaning "beautiful place by the sea"[15] in Abenaki dialect, was only a mere seven miles by wagon past the final stop on the train line, making it easily accessible for the first time in history. One spot in Ogunquit came to prominence as a center for art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perkins Cove, a melting pot of the old guard and the avant-garde, became the birthplace of much of the legacy of modern art in America.

Historiography, Theory, and Methodology

Before 2009, the study of these two schools was very localized, with research being conducted almost exclusively by historians native to the Ogunquit area. Two books were written on Perkins Cove, and most literature focusing on Field and Woodbury did not expand upon their geographical relation nor their schools. In 1976, Carrie Boyd wrote *The Cove: Perkins Cove at Ogunquit, Maine,* a small local history book of the area complete with photographs and

[13] Bolger, 87.
[14] Charles E. Shain, and Samuella Shain. *The Maine Reader: the Down East experience from 1614 to the present* (Nonpareil edition). Boston: Godine Publishers, 1997: 327.
[15] Tragard, 1.

drawings.[16] There is not much information on the publication information, widespread release, or author of this book, but it is an excellent source of geographic history. In direct conversation with *The Cove, A Century of Color, 1886–1986: Ogunquit, Maine's Art Colony* was published a decade later in 1987, providing a more exhaustive history of the area. Authored by Louise Tragard, the former museum coordinator at the Ogunquit Heritage Museum it gives a much more detailed overview of the history of the region and its ties to the artistic community. Its companion archives, also located in the Archives of American art, proved a valuable resource as well. While an immense resource for the history of the colony, it does not so much answer the question: *Why Maine?*

In 2009, the art exhibition *Call of the Coast: Art Colonies of New England* went on view at the Portland Museum of Art, along with was accompanied by a publication of the same title. One essay in this volume, written by Thomas Denenberg, former Chief Curator at the museum, explores the traditionalist and non-traditionalist forces at play in Ogunquit. This essay, titled "Ogunquit: The Old Fashioned and the Modern" provides the first inkling of my research question that I have come across in existing literature. Denenberg writes, "the story of Ogunquit… graphically illustrates that modernism and antimodernism were but two sides of the same coin in New England."[17] However, as this statement begins to tug at my question, this is not as exhaustive an analysis as I plan to do.

[16] Carrie Boyd. *The Cove: Perkins Cove at Ogunquit, Maine*. Place of publication not identified: [publisher not identified], 1976.
[17] Denenberg, 60.

Overarchingly, the Archives of American Art provide the best way to understand the inner workings of each man. Through the study of Woodbury's papers, a picture of a dedicated—if not rigid—teacher emerges. In Hamilton Easter Field's records, a creative, cutting-edge, dedicated mentor comes out, a man who sought to redefine art in America. Also crucial is the work of Louise Tragard, who compiled the Barn Gallery Associates Selected Records 1966–1987, also housed at the Archives. Her research for her book *A Century of Color* was an invaluable compilation of personal correspondences and research surrounding the Ogunquit Art Colony. Through her papers, a human picture emerges of the characters who inhabit this thesis.

Thesis Overview

In this thesis, the results of my research will be organized over six chapters. Chapter one is a lesson in art history, explaining the creative tensions between modernity and modernism as fundamental to the creation of American art colonies. I will draw on examples of art, culture, scholarship, and literature to explain this fundamental tension and characterize it within its time. Chapter two will detail the establishment of Charles H. Woodbury's art school, as well as an examination of his teaching notes from the Archives of American Art. These will give the reader a fuller picture of his academic and personal philosophy pertaining to artistic education. The third chapter will follow a similar structure, detailing the establishment of Hamilton Easter Field's art school as well as his teaching philosophy. Chapters two and three will also question what precisely drew these two men to Maine, and how this is reflected in their work and pedagogy.

The final two chapters of will investigate the fundamental changes brought to American art by the establishment of Field's modernist art school. Chapter five will look at the case study of Yasuo Kuniyoshi, one of Field's most famous students. Born in Japan and immigrating to the United States as a teenager, Kuniyoshi rose to prominence as one of Field's star pupils. He was the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Kuniyoshi redefined modern art, as well as what it meant to be considered an American artist, warranting an entire chapter dedicated to the impacts of his life and career. The final chapter will take a wider lens, looking at how the Ogunquit artists' colony has impacted American art up to this point, and the fundamental institutions it has bolstered and inspired. In all, this thesis will argue that Ogunquit served as a foundational turning point within the transition from the old guard to American modernism. Artists were inspired by the landscape, vernacular architecture, and folk art found in Maine, which they found to be a welcome antidote to the rigid prescriptions of modernity and industrialization, aiding them to establish a uniquely American artistic identity.

Chapter I: Modernism vs. Modernity

To fully appreciate the impact of the artistic shift represented by the Ogunquit artists' colony, one must first understand the history of modernism in the United States. Modern art often escapes definition and can be found jumbled in the mind amidst an array of dates, artists, and movements. However, in giving a brief history of American society, the modern artistic impulse can be easily understood as a product of resistance. In the late 1800s, the world was rapidly modernizing before the eyes of every American. This occurred in tandem with what is dubbed Victorianism, a set of cultural mores that emphasized traditional bourgeois values. Among these values were thrift, diligence, persistence, and an inherent optimism about capitalism and

industrialization.[18]

It is often wrongly assumed that modernism equates to modernity, but this could not be further from the truth. Modernism rebelled against this idea of a peaceful stable society, aiming to defy convention. The artists at the forefront of the modernist movement were inspired by authors such as Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche, and William James, whose ideas turned traditional perceptions of the order of the world on their head.[19] Nietzsche questioned the nature of existence, Bergson questioned creativity, and James questioned morals and the soul. Each philosopher, in turn, provided the psychological basis for the cultural movement of modernism. Artists and creatives felt alienated by the persistent optimism of their time and sought alternative means of expressing their apprehension towards the modern condition.

William James' philosophy emphasized a stream of consciousness that opposed the rigidity of traditional forms of artistic expression. Art had been taught with the same strictness since the Renaissance, emphasizing close looking and drawing based on observation. [20] Many forward-thinking art teachers found this to be too limiting, as "It bound students to external objects and they missed the refinement of designs."[21] Traditionally, skills had been passed down from master artist to apprentice, leaving little room to break from tradition and for budding artists to experiment with their style. James' philosophy emphasized a "raw sensory flux,"[22] an idea which Victorian conceptions of rationality went directly against. Experimental flow and the

[18] Daniel Joseph Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism." *American Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1987): 9.
[19] Singal, 11.
[20] Akio Okazaki, "Arthur Wesley Dow's Address in Kyoto, Japan (1903)." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 4 (2003): 84–93.
[21] Okazaki, 88.
[22] Singal, 11.

dynamism of thought and experimentation were the only ways for humans to truly understand their reality.[23] True experimentation and knowledge-seeking required one to abandon the sensible rationality of Victorian society. Abstract and alternative expressions of this knowledge-seeking would reveal themselves in the modernist art produced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Foreign Influence

The genesis for American modernism can be found in Europe, rooted within the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Symbolist movements. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution drastically restructured society. Artists such as Claude Monet and Eggar Degas responded by rejecting the official Salon, instead staging their own exhibitions to show their radical new work. Their oeuvre was defined by a break with traditionalism, often composed of "short, broken brushstrokes that barely convey forms, pure unblended colors, and an emphasis on the effects of light. Rather than neutral white, grays, and blacks, Impressionists often rendered shadows and highlights in color. The artists' loose brushwork gives an effect of spontaneity and effortlessness that masks their often carefully constructed compositions."[24] This radical use of light and color to emphasize feeling and motion rather than naturalism was of tremendous influence on the American modernists who followed them. In the European modernists, American artists saw the ability to break from tradition and still be successful artists.

Additionally, new cultural infusions beyond the Western tradition shaped the artistic

[23] Singal, 11.
[24] Margaret Samu, "Impressionism: Art and Modernity." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

landscape. After Japan opened its ports in the 1850s to trade, an influx of Japanese art hit American art markets, inspiring and fundamentally changing the way American art was practiced and taught. Collectors such as John La Farge, J. Alden Weir, Francis Lathrop, Arnold Genthe, and Ernest Fenollosa bought Japanese art, including ukiyo-e in bulk. Ukiyo-e is a Japanese term used to denote the Japanese style of woodblock printing, literally translating to "images of the floating world," —an artistic existence outside the bounds of everyday life. [25] Rather than realism or drawing from observation, Japanese art was preoccupied with the concepts of line, color, and *notan*, which means the contrast between light and dark, or the tonality of a piece.[26] Composition, and the interplay of colors, lines, and tones therein were of utmost importance in Japanese art, a concept that was foreign to American art.

One of the earliest American artists and teachers to experiment with the conventions of Japanese art was Arthur Wesley Dow, one of the most influential, artist-teachers of the turn of the twentieth century. He became fascinated with breaking from traditional means of teaching art, and began teaching his students at his Ipswich, Massachusetts art school to draw what they felt rather than what they observed. Dow would create a singular composition of a woodblock and reprint it numerous times with variations on the colors and values to evoke different feelings. In engaging in such an experimental process, Dow embodied this modernist ideal of intellectual flux and experimentation.

[25] Julia Meech, "The Early Years of Japanese Print Collecting in North America." *Impressions*, no. 25 (2003): 18.
[26] Helen Burnham, Sarah Elizabeth Thompson, and Jane E. Braun. *Looking East: Western Artists and the Allure of Japan*. First edition. Boston, Massachusetts: MFA Publications, 2014, 23–25.

In 1899, eight years after his first encounter with Japanese art, Dow published *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers,* which shaped the way Americans saw modern form and composition. The book was reprinted in twenty editions and was wildly successful, transmitting his message globally.[27] Through his teaching and this seminal book, Dow helped to bring the influence of Japanese aestheticism to the conception of an American modernist style. In the success of this book, we see the emergence of American modernism as representing a new age of global exchange, one not confined to insular Western tradition. The subject matter of American art was not only beginning to change, but so were the ways it was conceptualized and theoretically experimented with.

In 1911, anthropologist Franz Boas of Columbia University published *The Mind of Primitive Man*, dispelling the Victorian conception that there existed a dichotomy between "savagery" and "civilization," one which delineated between the West and the non-Western other.[28] Boas introduced the nuance of cultural perspective, arguing that attributes were neither civilized nor primitive, but a matter of cultural perception.[29] This book destabilized the foundation of pseudo-science that much of Western racism was based upon. The collection, study, and even veneration of Japanese art demonstrates the breakdown of the status quo, as well as the decentering of traditionalism within American modernism.

[27] Dow, Acton, and Goddu, 5.
[28] Singal, 18.
[29] Singal, 19.

The Avant–Garde and the 1913 Armory Show

Literally defined, avant-garde is a military term, referring to the front flank of the army.[30] Interpreting this metaphor within the context of art, it denotes those who lead the charge, ahead of the pack and paving the way for those behind them. It is defined not so much by what it is, but by what it opposes. Peter Burger wrote of the avant-garde, "It radically questions the very principle of art in bourgeois society according to which the individual is considered the creator of the work of art."[31] The question of authorship and ownership was particularly relevant during the genesis of modernism, as artists began to produce work that was not specifically commissioned by patrons but was an extension of their personal musings about the world. Art was now not just produced for an outer audience but made to reflect the inner musings of its creator.

The 1913 Armory Show in New York is often seen as the call to arms of early American modernism and the avant-garde, the genesis of the field within the common perception. While modernism existed in the public perception by the end of the nineteenth century, the New York Armory Show came to define the avant-garde. The show was organized by the American Association of Painters and Sculptors, its chief planners being Walt Kuhn, secretary of the organization, and Elmer McRae, its treasurer.[32] This show was in part reactionary, responding to the "firing" of several younger, more progressive artists from the National Academy of Design show.[33] To Kuhn, who wrote with loathing about the rigidity of the old guard within the National

[30] Marjorie Perloff, "The avant-garde phase of American modernism" in The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism. Edited by Kalaidjian, Walter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 195.
[31] Peter Burger, "Theory of the Avant-Garde," ed. Wlad Godzich, tr. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 51.
[32] Milton W. Brown, "Walt Kuhn's Armory Show." *Archives of American Art Journal* 27, no. 2 (1987): 3.
[33] Brown, 5.

Academy, the only possible solution was a "revolution."[34] In his book The Story of the Armory Show, published in 1938, Kuhn details the conditions that precipitated its genesis, writing that he saw "the need of breaking down the stifling and smug condition of local art affairs as applied to the ambition of American painters and sculptors."[35]

On February 17, 1913, the 69th Street Armory opened its doors to the public after a long and arduous planning period. Amongst the artists represented in the show were Paul Cezanne, Henri Matisse, Marcel Duchamp, and Edouard Manet, European modernists whose work Kuhn longed to introduce to American audiences.[36] For the first few weeks of the show, attendance was tepid; the public seemed to lack an interest in the show. However, after a few weeks, this all changed, and a cultural explosion would happen that would reshape not just American art, but American culture. Critics, the general public, and even former President Theodore Roosevelt flocked to the Armory to see this scandalous show. Describing the divided reactions of its guests, Kuhn wrote in 1938, "old friends argued and separated, never to speak again. Indignation meetings were going on in all the clubs. Academic painters came every day and left regularly, spitting fire and brimstone—but they came—everybody came."[37] While exact attendance was not recorded, its enormity can be gauged by its seismic cultural reverberations.

Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase (No.2),* 1912, [figure 1] a cubist painting that was the decided epicenter of controversy for the show, with Kuhn retrospectively describing

[34] Brown, 5.
[35] Walt Kuhn, "The story of the Armory Show, 1938." Walt Kuhn Family papers and Armory Show records, 1859-1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
[36]Kuhn, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
[37] Kuhn, 17.

it as “the success de scandale for our exhibition.”[38] Before offering up his painting for the American show, Duchamp had first submitted it for the 1912 Salon des Indépendants exhibition in Paris, but it had been rejected rather unceremoniously. The Salon Cubists rejected it in a bid to “to avoid the charge- often leveled against modern artists at this time- that they deliberately courted scandal,” essentially declaring it too avant-garde, even for them.[39] The reason that they gave is shockingly conservative to the present-day sensibilities of modern art, declaring that “[a] nude never descends the stairs- a nude reclines."[40] In an interview with Vogue magazine in 1963, Duchamp mocks this declaration, stating "even their little revolutionary temple couldn't understand that a nude could be *descending* the stairs.”[41]

Fig. 1: Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2),* 1912. Oil on canvas, 57 7/8 × 35 1/8 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1950-134-59.

[38] Kuhn, 11.
[39] Michael R. Taylor, “Marcel Duchamp’s Nude Descending a Staircase [No. 2] and the 1913 Armory Show Scandal Revisited.” *Archives of American Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3/4, 2012, 58.
[40] William Seitz, "What's Happened to Art? An Interview with Marcel Duchamp on Present Consequences of New York's 1913 Armory Show," Vogue (New York), no. 4 (15 February 1963), 112.
[41] Taylor, 58.

In fact, Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* was not the "deliberately unintelligible"[42] mess that critics painted it to be, but a careful study of movement. This was a core tenet of modernism, an attempt to explain phenomena beyond the treatment of realism. In the Archives of American Art Journal. Michael R. Taylor describes *Nude Descending a Staircase* as going beyond the experimentation of its contemporaries and going as far as to declare it a redefining work within the genre of Cubism. Taylor writes, "While the faceted disintegration of the mechanized figure and the wood-toned, monochromatic palette are typical of Analytical Cubist paintings of the time, the serial depiction of movement in the *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* goes beyond the work of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso in its effort to map the motion and energy of the body as it moves through space"[43] This reflects the core of William James' argument, a "raw sensory flux" that aids the human mind in its knowledge-seeking. Using a combination of photography and observation, Duchamp used the avant-garde to express his quest for determining how the body moves through space. This quest is not illogical at all, in fact it directly relates to the scientific inquiry taking place all over the world during its time.

As evidenced by the public perception of the Armory Show and Duchamp's painting specifically, it is clear that 1913 ushered in a new era in American art. It brought European modernism to the mainstream in a way that it hadn't been previously and eschewed the cementation of the avant-garde into the cultural fabric of America.

Modernism Evolves

Within the idea of the avant-garde is the fundamental notion that modernism is not static. An

[42] Taylor, 52.
[43] Taylor, 57.

underpinning of the tensions between Woodbury and Field is the notion that no two modernists shared the same philosophy, and the older generation within a progressive movement can still be considered conservative by more progressive members of the field. As poet Ezra Pound termed it, modernism sought to, "make it new,"[44] a goal that underwrote the constant transformation of modernist art. If we are looking at a period of time from roughly 1890 to 1955, it is logical to assume that subdivisions exist within this movement. Between 1890 and 1910 is the period deemed the "prehistory of modernism[45]" by Laura Winkiel. Woodbury can be found within this period, influenced by the innovative Impressionist and Post-Impressionist styles of early European modernists. Hamilton Easter Field falls into the next period within modernism, known as "high modernism."[46] Within this period, usually dated between 1910 and 1930, the most well-known modernist innovations were made, coinciding with the zeitgeist of the Armory Show. This is the period that is traditionally conceptualized as "modernist" and represents a much sharper departure from academic painting and realism.

Art historian Barbara H. Weinberg sums up the evolution of modernism in America, writing "Many American artists worked in the Impressionist style into the 1920s, but innovation had long since waned. By 1910, the less genteel approach of urban realists known as the Ashcan School had emerged. In 1913, the immense display of avant-garde European art at the Armory Show made even the Ashcan School seem old-fashioned."[47] This distinction of the old-fashioned within modernism is the key to understanding the fundamental differences between Woodbury

[44] Laura Winkiel, *Modernism: The Basics*, (London: Routledge, 2017), 4.
[45] Winkiel, 2
[46] Winkiel, 2
[47] Barbara Weinberg, H, "American Impressionism." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

and Field. It is often wrongly assumed that the two clashed because Woodbury was a traditionalist and Field was a modernist. This is an oversimplification of the tensions within modernism, as both men fell into the modernist camp. Rather, the tensions can be explained by the ever-evolving nature of modernism over its roughly half-century grip on American culture.

The Art Colony

Like modernism itself, the concept of the art colony was born of the European tradition of the nineteenth century. Steve Shipp's 1996 book *American Art Colonies, 1850–1930* provides a crucial overview of the development of the American art colony. Shipp writes, "The term 'art colony' has become a descriptive but somewhat vague notion in the American language, sometimes referring to a place where artists once gathered and worked, sometimes to a place where the one-time art-colony has evolved into a community in which art and artists are vital to the economy, and more currently, a place where artists and art galleries are concentrated in a particular area of a town or city."[48] In the case of Ogunquit, all three definitions apply. What was once a picturesque escape for city folk, evolved into a thriving economy of art as a pillar of the community. Presently, the numerous galleries and American art museums that dot the town continue its legacy as an artistic hub.

Shipp writes that each colony had a reason for existing, and Perkins Cove was no exception. Artists in American became inspired by the French art colonies of Giverny, Pont-Aven, and Barbizon, where "artists learned their art from nature instead of acquiring their knowledge from

[48] Steve Shipp, *American Art Colonies, 1850–1930: A Historical Guide to America's Original Art Colonies and Their Artists.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996, ix–x.

fundamental but creatively limited academic theories."[49] In fact, it was Charles H. Woodbury's return from the shores of France where he learned of European Impressionism that inspired his establishment of the Ogunquit art colony. For Woodbury, his art colony was a direct response and rejection of modernity, as modeled by the French art colonies. Denenberg credits Maine art colonies with "the construction of the mythic New England, of New England as a therapeutic environment."[50] Much like their French predecessors, American modernists sought refuge and inspiration outside of modern society, hence the draw to locations as remote as the Maine coast. Within this framework, the remote artists' colony becomes vital to the invention of a uniquely American modernism. It is within the context of this fraught transitory period that we come to our story set on the banks of Perkins Cove. When Charles H. Woodbury and Hamilton Easter Field each set foot in Maine, they could not know how their artistic development at Ogunquit and their interpersonal-ideological struggles would both mirror and shape American art forever.

Chapter II: Charles H. Woodbury's Marine Fascinations

Charles Herbert Woodbury first set his sights on Perkins Cove during the summer of 1888. He stumbled upon the cove during a visit to his fiancée's family's home in York Beach, seven miles south of Ogunquit, and his initial attraction to it was almost a biblical reverence. Louise Tragard compares his impression of the cove to Saul's arrival in Damascus, writing, "Woodbury's spirit was stabbed broad awake by the inspiration of this typical, old-world study whose nature was dear to so many late 19th century artists."[51] Much like his European Impressionist contemporaries, Woodbury felt drawn to the coastal seclusion of the coast, as well

[49] Shipp, x.
[50] Kevin.
[51] Tragard, 3.

its simplicity and charm. From this initial sighting, blossomed a vibrant artist's colony that would shape the trajectory of American modernism. Woodbury would embrace the European styles of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, instilling within his students the pedagogy of motion. Through painting the water that surrounded the cove, Woodbury combined an engineer's training with an Impressionist's rendering of light and movement to create palpable depictions of Maine's coast.

Engineering an Artist

Woodbury was born in Lynn, Massachusetts on July 14, 1864, to a family of engineers.[52] He came from a long line of Massachusetts residents, the first of whom arrived in Salem in 1640, serving as a civil engineer who helped to build the town.[53] Thus, a line of engineers stretching back two centuries can perhaps account for the creative bent possessed by the young Charles H. Woodbury. As a boy, he felt a strong affinity for art, and started drawing at the age of five. In high school, Woodbury began to draw from nature, a practice he would continue into his mature work. In August of 1881, he took his first painting trip to Wolfboro, New Hampshire, and in the same year passed the first jury at the Boston Art Club. His academic style of painting was largely influenced by drawing nature, and in the following years, he would take trips around the East Coast to paint, drawing inspiration from places like Swampscott, Marblehead, and Gloucester.[54]

[52] Tragard, 7.
[53] William Howe Downes, "Charles Herbert Woodbury and His Work." *Brush and Pencil* 6, no. 1 (1900): 1.
[54] Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866-1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution Roll 268, slide 269.

In 1882, at the age of eighteen, Woodbury was one of the youngest participants Boston Art Club Exhibition, a testament to his budding talent.[55] In the end, however, he was swayed by his family into getting an education in the family profession: engineering. Coming from a staunch working-class New England family, his parents fostered his passion for the arts, but only to a point. They encouraged him to get a practical degree, like engineering, to supplement his artistic talents. In October of 1882,[56] Woodbury enrolled in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, teaching drawing and painting on the side to fund his engineering tuition. [57]After graduating with honors in Mechanical Engineering in 1886, Woodbury continued to teach and paint, eventually turning his hobby into his full-time career.[58] While his education in engineering may seem like a waste to some considering his career turn, it in fact had a positive influence on his artistic practice. Woodbury's MIT education had "stood him in good stead by promoting constructive thinking and assisting him to clarify his ideas."[59] His later work would continue to reflect an engineer's fascination with the mechanics of nature.

While teaching Woodbury met Marcia Oakes, the young woman who would eventually lead him to Maine and to his artistic calling. She was one of Woodbury's early pupils, and immediately captured his attention and affections. Her family who hailed from the state of Maine and visiting them would be the stroke of fate that would lead Woodbury to find his muse in Ogunquit. Marcia was also an artist in her own right. While proud of her husband's accomplishments, she would never receive the same level of recognition as him, despite her

[55] Tragard, 7.
[56] Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866-1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Roll 268, slide 269.
[57] Charles H. Sawyer, "Charles Woodbury: Painter and Teacher." *The American Magazine of Art* 29, no. 8 (1936), 520.
[58] Tragard, 7.
[59] Sawyer, 520.

works being shown both nationally and abroad.[60] She would die in 1913 at the age of forty-eight, isolated in rural Maine and suffering from untreatable migraines, the stress of both contributing to her cause of death.

After their wedding in 1890, the pair undertook an extensive journey abroad in Europe. On the first leg of their trip, they stayed in Paris during the winter of 1890–91, studying art in different art schools. Woodbury studied at the Académie Julian, while Marcia spent her time at Lazar's school.[61] It is key that Woodbury began his training abroad in France, which provided the archetypal art colony that would soon inspire those that began popping up in America. French artists had a rich tradition of seeking inspiration from the coast and the provincial towns, a calling that Woodbury would continue to fulfill once teaching in the states. From France, the Woodburys continued their romp through Europe, eventually landing in Holland where Marcia's career flourished.

Ultimately, it would be Woodbury's travels to and from Europe that would provide the inspirational springboard for his signature subject: water. During his travels abroad, he encountered water as a regular character in his daily life. His first marine piece was titled *Mid-Ocean* [figure 2]. The painting came out of "of years of unconscious observation of the sea"[62] and was particularly inspired by the waves created by the ship's wake on Woodbury's third Atlantic crossing.[63] Art critic William Howe Downes describes the work in his 1900 article on Woodbury, writing "To me it has brought back not only the sensations of the visual nerves, but also the associated

[60] Tragard, 10.
[61] Downes, 7.
[62] Downes, 10.
[63] Downes, 10.

sensations of other senses —more especially the sounds of weltering, seething, hissing, whispering waters, in wild liquid torment fleeing from the screw."[64] This description proves especially apt, the sea seems to move before the viewer's eyes, defying the expectations of a static canvas. The date of the work's completion—between 1894 and1895—proves key to understanding Woodbury's decision to buy land in Ogunquit. His artistic love affair with water would finally find an inspiration well amongst the swelling waters of Perkins Cove.

Fig. 2: Charles H. Woodbury. *Mid-Ocean*, 1894. Oil on canvas, 49 x 72 in. Berkshire Museum.

Establishing A School

Despite the Woodburys' enriching experiences abroad, Maine's seascapes continued to call to Charles. Following the birth of their son David in 1896, the couple purchased a plot of land in Ogunquit called Pool Privilege.[65] The following year, they built a studio on the property, and in

[64] Downes, 10.
[65] Tragard, 8.

1898 they built a house on the property overlooking the cove.[66] An artist with an engineer's training, Woodbury was drawn to the movement of the waves and the water and expressing that movement through a static medium. Charles H. Sawyer wrote of Woodbury's view in 1936 "an endless and varied assortment of material for painting is available outside his Ogunquit window, and he has preferred to remain close to nature as his source of inspiration, although he delights in the abstract expression of its qualities."[67] Woodbury's abstraction was not concerned with the purely abstract, as was the case with later American modernists, but with the movement inherent in the water. He sought to capture this movement how he felt and saw it, through the lens of an engineer's eye. It was this curiosity and academic philosophy that he would impact on his students beginning in 1898. For him, subject matter was merely a vehicle for depicting the mechanics of motion which fascinated him so, mirroring the avant-garde exploration of motion of artists such as Duchamp. Fundamentally, Woodbury's seascapes and Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* were both vehicles for the exploration of motion.

In 1898, following critical acclaim for his solo show at the J. Eastman Chase Gallery in Boston, Woodbury capitalized on his increasing popularity and began offering a six-week summer instructional course in Ogunquit.[68] He developed the Woodbury Course in Applied Observation in tandem with Elizabeth Ward Perkins, a Massachusetts patron who worked closely with Woodbury in building his school. Much of Woodbury's artistic philosophy of art is recorded in his correspondence with her, letters which are now held in the Archives of American Art.

[66] Denenberg, 56.
[67] Sawyer, 522.
[68] Tragard, 13.

Among Woodbury's chief concerns was the instillation of the importance of motion among his students. In a letter to Perkins, Woodbury writes, "in order to make this universal training practical, two generally accepted conventions must be broken, —first that expression in line, color, and clay is for the so-called talented only, and second that such subjects as motion, perspective and light and shade are too difficult for children and beginners."[69] He believed that "advanced" concepts such as motion were fundamental to art education, not secondary. He also insisted on the importance of individualism within his students, describing the "profound and vital personal impulse and interest"[70] that was necessary for true learning. However, among his writings, perhaps his most modernist statement is found in a list of six keys for the teaching of art that he addressed to Perkins. The final item in this list simply states, "Nature is a source, not a standard."[71] This statement goes defiantly against the old guard, which saw imitation as the hallmark of a good work of art. Woodbury disagreed with this, writing "imitation kills all initiative in children and beginners."[72] This statement aligns Woodbury and his school with American modernism, a way of thinking Woodbury preached incessantly to his students over the following decades.

Woodbury's *Breaking Wave,* a pre-1933 watercolor [figure 3], exemplifies his pedagogy of motion at Ogunquit. In this work, a wave breaks directly in front of the viewer, thrusting them into the dynamics of a wild sea. The work is swirling and hazy, adopting many of its stylistic conventions from the European Impressionists he so admired. In its frantic and swirling motion, Breaking Wave embodies William James' concept of "raw sensory flux" expertly, showing the

[69] Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866-1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Roll 268, slide 157.
[70]Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866-1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Roll 268, slide 158.
[71] Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866-1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Roll 268, slide 163.
[72] Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866-1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Roll 268, slide 159.

sea literally in flux. Woodbury was not so concerned with what the ocean looked like, but more with capturing the exact feeling of a breaking wave, and the frenzy of motion that accompanied it.

Fig. 3: Charles H. Woodbury. Breaking Wave, before 1933. Watercolor and gouache on cardboard, 16 15/16 x 21 1/8 in. Harvard Art Museums, 1933.19.

The Virginal Wayfarers

Woodbury's course began in the summer of 1898, and ran until 1917, when he paused to join the war effort and make war posters. After World War I, the course ran from 1924 until Woodbury's death in 1940.[73] The curriculum focused on painting and drawing in traditional mediums such oil, watercolor, and pencil. A suggested by its location in Maine, the course emphasized the direct observation of nature by its students, who could be found perched on rocks all over town,

[73] Tragard, 13.

simply observing the ocean. His pupils were primarily women, many from wealthy families in the Boston area. Nicknamed the "Virginal Wayfarers," by the locals, Woodbury's school became known for the upper-class women it attracted, those hoping to escape the stress of the city during the summer. [74]

The largely female composition of Woodbury's student body speaks to a uniquely Victorian ailment known as "Neurasthenia" or simply "nervousness." This anxiety brought about by the modern condition marked the lives of many middle- and upper-class East Coasters of the Gilded Age. While this was seen as a universal condition present amongst both men and women, it was also highly gendered.[75] As explained by George Beard, the author of *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences,* this condition was experienced by people of "refined sensibilities."[76] Nature and repose were seen as the chief cures for women with this condition. Ogunquit provided the perfect place to pursue a refined hobby while escaping the anxieties of the industrial city. Zachary Ross explains the condition's significance among Woodbury's student demographic:

> Beard's views on neurasthenia resonated with a population concerned not only with its health and ability to adapt to modern society, but also with securing its place in the middle and upper reaches of the social ladder. This had particular significance among the upper classes of New England—the epicenter of nervousness according to Beard—whose

[74] Denenberg, 57.
[75] Zachary Ross, "Rest for the Weary: American Nervousness and the Aesthetics of Repose," in *Women on the Verge: The Culture of Neurasthenia in 19th-Century America*, ed. Katherine Williams (Stanford: Stanford University Museum of Art, 2005), 22.
[76] Ross, 22.

> cultural hegemony was most at risk during this period. Within these circles, nervousness became a social-Darwinian signifier of one's social respectability…[77]

Within the demographics of Woodbury's school, a traditionally classed and gendered image of the turn of the century woman appeared. While these women strayed from the traditional role of wife and mother in the upper crust of a big city, their summer escapism still subscribed to the Victorian conventions of gender. These women simultaneously rebelled from their traditional roles while continuing to subscribe to the outmoded ideology that their upper-class femininity was a delicate condition that required rural rest and relaxation.

Among these women were artists such as Charlotte Butler, Amy Cabot, and Gertrude Fiske.[78] Butler and Cabot were talented, albeit rather traditional artists. Both gained minor regional success for their landscape paintings, but neither produced anything remarkable. Perhaps both painters' most notable attributes are their sense of color and motion imbued by their mentor Woodbury. Fiske, however, stood out from her peers as one of Woodbury's more successful trainees. After completing Woodbury summer course, the *Boston Sunday Herald* lauded her "theories of color and robust use of the brush"[79] that she had internalized at the Ogunquit Summer School of Painting and Drawing. Clearly, Woodbury's near obsession with modernist conventions had been successfully imparted to his students.

Fiske's *Tide River* [figure 4] exemplifies Woodbury's pedagogy. In this impressionist landscape, Fiske centers the motion of the river that cuts through the canvas, using contrasting

[77] Ross, 22.
[78] Denenberg, 57.
[79] Denenberg, 57.

stripes of light and dark blues to highlight the rush of the water along the sloping banks. She utilizes smooth swaths of color to emphasize that it is not realism she is going for, but instead embodying the feeling of a rushing river on a sunny day. The bright oranges, greens and yellows that dust the riverbanks and provide a warm and luminous contrast to the rushing water. In Fiske's work, Woodbury's pedagogy of motion is apparent. Her mentor's affinity for the flux of water is evident, continuing his modernist investigation into how the mechanics of nature are internalized and interpreted by the artist.

Fig. 4: Gertrude Fiske. Tide River, n.d. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in. Image courtesy Bonham's.

Woodbury's Legacy

In the collective memory of the history of the Ogunquit artist's colony, Charles H. Woodbury's contributions have been sidelined, his conservative modernism seen as less

impactful than his successors' and therefore less worthy of retelling. However, Woodbury was nonetheless a man of the age of modernism, inspired by the scientific world around him. Attending art school in Paris, the hotbed of Impressionism and early European modernism, Woodbury uncovered a knack for the unconventional. Art had long been a static field, with academic painters dominating at renowned institutions like the National Academy of Design. It was his training in engineering that led Woodbury to Maine, seeking inspiration from the water as he had learned to do in Europe. Woodbury staunchly rejected the slavish imitation touted by centuries of Western art education, and instead developed his own curriculum imbued with his propensity for depicting motion.

Maine was the antidote for the modern condition for him, his modernist muse. The movement of the waves outside his window provided the perfect mechanism for expressing the abstract lines of motion, combining both Eastern and modern artistic conventions.[80] It was this hybridity that marked modernism as unique, American art's first period of true dynamic experimentation and innovation as a culture all its own.

Chapter III: Hamilton Easter Field: A New Generation Arrives in Ogunquit

It was during the summer of 1902, only four years after the establishment of Woodbury's school that the young, charismatic Hamilton Easter Field breezed into Ogunquit. He rode into town by carriage, alongside his young protégé Robert Laurent, a young French sculptor of only twelve years old. Laurent was from Brittany, a region famous for its European art colonies that so profoundly influenced the establishment of their American successors.[81] The two men sought

[80] Sawyer, 525.
[81] Tragard, 24.

land to develop an art school, a plot they could not have known would eventually shape American modernism for over a century to come. It would take until 1911 for them to formally establish the Summer School of Graphic Arts, which would transform and redefine American modernism.[82] In his teachings, Field drew from the past to usher in a uniquely American style, seeking inspiration from the vernacular folk art, architecture, and culture of the rustic Maine coast.

Hamilton Easter Field was born on April 21, 1873, in Brooklyn, New York. His parents, Aaron Field and Lydia Seaman, were Quakers, a faith which had a particular historical stronghold in their neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. The family's home at 106 Columbia Heights was a sprawling three story mansion, reflective of the family's wealth and status.[83] Due to his parents' financial standing, young Hamilton was given an excellent education, and his parents encouraged his budding intertest in the arts. He attended Brooklyn Friends School and then the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. For college, he enrolled at Columbia and studied architecture, dropping out after only a year due to illness. From there, he enrolled at Harvard, but found his true passion in art. Abandoning a purely academic education, Field sailed to Paris on his twenty-first birthday to pursue an artistic education.[84]

Once in France, Field enrolled at the Academic Colarossi, a rather independent and progressive art school, an antidote to the prescriptive conservatism that many young artists felt was hindering them at the established École des Beaux Arts. Under the tutelage of Gustave

[82] Tragard, 27.
[83] William Green, "Hamilton Easter Field (1873-1922)." *Impressions*, no. 8 (1983), 2.
[84] Bolger, 81.

Courtois and Raphael Collin, Field began to develop his signature avant-garde perspective on art.[85] In France, Field's artistic education continued to be shaped both within and outside of his formal education—perhaps most notably through his friendship with Ignace-Henri-Jean Theodore Fantin-Latour—who exerted great influence on his pedagogical methodology and philosophy. Fantin-Latour was staunchly opposed to the concept of artistic academies and teachers, instead favoring individualism.[86] To him, individualism meant rejecting formalized artistic guidelines and instead opting to create one's own unique artistic style.

In Paris Field's knack for collecting art, particularly Japanese art, was fostered. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the popularity of Japanese art had exploded in the West after the opening of Japan to the West in 1853. Artists seeking to establish new styles looked to it for inspiration. For example, Vincent Van Gogh was a modernist who was particularly inspired by Japanese conventions of representation, copying form and color in several instances. Field began to collect with purpose. He particularly valued the prints he deemed "primitives," and among his favorite artists he counted Ichiryusai Kuniyoshi, and the classic artists such as Katsuhika Hokusai and Ando Hiroshige.[87] This affinity for Japanese aesthetics soon inspired his modernist pedagogy and his patronage of one of his most famous students, Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

Field also met his young protégé, Robert Laurent, in France. It was by chance that he encountered Laurent in Concarneau in Brittany during a painting trip. Laurent's parents ran the inn in which Field was staying, and the young artist made his talents readily available to Field.

[85] Bolger, 81.
[86] Bolger, 82.
[87] Bolger, 84.

Immediately recognizing the youth's budding talent, he offered his extensive resources to foster Laurent's sculpture practice and sponsor his family's move to America. With Laurent in tow, Field spent the years between 1902 and 1908 buying up land and fishing shacks around Perkins Cove to turn into his art school.[88]

Maine's Vernacular Inspiration

For Field, Maine, and Ogunquit in particular, was the perfect inspiration point to harken back to a rich American tradition. Laurent later reflected on Maine's culture as an inspiration for his modernist style, crediting the naturalness, organic quality, and avoidance of overt decoration as key tenets of both the modernism that Field taught, but also the traditional folk and colonial arts of New England.[89] It was commonly held that folk art had been "insulated" from the "stultifying effects of academicism"[90] As industrialization had swept through the nation during the industrial revolution, modernists sought places that had been spared the scythe of urbanization. Ogunquit, only accessible by horse and buggy at the turn of the century, was the perfect solution.

Folk art in early America was often maligned as being naïve, nonacademic, or provincial.[91] The condescension inherent in these descriptors does not account for the variety in the work nor its impact on the development of New England. These works were characterized by "strong colors, broad and direct application of paint, patterned surfaces, generalized light, skewed scale and proportion, and conspicuous modeling,"[92] all traits that aligned with Field's

[88] Tragard, 26.
[89] Kevin D. Murphy, "Early Folk Art Collecting in Maine: Its Contributions to Modernism," *The Magazine Antiques (1971)*. Vol. 174. New York: Brant Publications, Incorporated, 2008, 88.
[90] Murphy, 84–85.
[91] Carrie Rebora Barratt, "Nineteenth-Century American Folk Art." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.).
[92] Barratt.

pedagogy. In rejecting naturalism, a trait that Field greatly admired, these works provided a logical precursor for the modernist style. Among the most popular types of early American folk art were paintings, sculptures, wooden decoys, and home textiles such as quilts and hooked rugs. Although mainly a painter himself, Field had an immense appreciation for all types of folk art. He is quoted as saying "art, even decorative art, is the expression of the soul of the people."[93] In articulating this idea, Field was not only expressing his appreciation for all folk art, but also destabilizing the hierarchy inherent in perceptions of art, which values painting over other more "domestic" forms of art such as quilting and weaving. In all folk art, Field saw a manifestation of the crux of a uniquely American identity.

The architecture of Perkins Cove also served as a major inspiration point for Field. The architecture of the Maine coast has long been described as "vernacular," implying a lack of following artistic tradition or traditional style guides.[94] By buying up these simple fishing shacks, Field was able to construct his own simplistic fantasy life. He immersed himself in an imagined world where the Industrial Revolution had never taken hold, decorating his various properties with folk art such as weathervanes, colonial portraits, and carved decoys.[95] In an essay on Maine folk art collections, Kevin D. Murphy draws a link between the buildings themselves and American modernism:

> Their modest geometric masses, shingled walls, and sparse decoration appealed to artists who purported to reject academicism and professionalism in favor of direct expression. Moreover, these little barns and sheds clustered together could be seen as geometric

[93] Bolger, 95.
[94] Murphy, 85.
[95] Denenberg, 58.

> forms. Thus, in many ways, the vernacular landscape of Maine was perceived to embody many of the characteristics of modernist art and architecture: an almost abstract geometry, avoidance of academicism, functionalism, and directness.[96]

By immersing himself in a world which was ordered in a way that aligned with his artistic philosophy, Field created a working-class fantasy in which he could escape his privileged upbringing and connect with a world that he felt was more artistically authentic and untouched by modernity. There are even reports of the upper-class and flamboyant Field attempting to integrate himself with the fishermen, a group of people he felt embodied the hardworking soul of Americana[97]. Retrospectively this act of "playing" a class that he was very much not a part of can be viewed as insensitive, perhaps even offensive. While this is an accurate assessment of Field's art school, it also reflects common anxieties about the encroachment of urbanization. Field was not alone in seeking reprieve amongst nature.

Field's Pedagogy

Beginning in 1911, the Summer School of Graphic Arts began instructing its small but dedicated student base in the anti-pedagogical model of its founder. At the forefront of the school was the importance of individuality and self-expression. In 1913, Field is reported to have said to his students at the close of the season, "Best of all, not one of you have come to paint in any way like myself."[98] As a teacher, he did not see himself as a standard to be compared to, or even emulated. In fact, he believed that art criticism itself was subjective and saw no reason to rely on the typical model of critique.

---

[96] Murphy, 86.
[97] Barn Gallery selected records, 1966–1987, Archives of American Art. Box 1, Folder 35.
[98] *Hamilton Easter Field and the rise of modern art in America*. University of Delaware (Winterthur Program), 1973, 6.

The mood at Field's school was much more jovial than the relatively tame atmosphere of Woodbury's proper Boston ladies. Recalling the summer debauchery at the School of Graphic Arts, Lloyd Goodrich described drunken costume parties and plein-air nude drawing classes.[99] The informal tone of the school was reflective of his distaste of what he termed "propaganda," or the establishment of objective artistic standards in general. As a solution, he encouraged each of his students to seek their own historical role models. Despite being a self-described modernist, Field sought inspiration from every era of art. Among his inspirations he credited Raphael, Edgar Degas, Pablo Picasso, and Winslow Homer.[100]

In a move which some may call extreme, Field soon abandoned artistic theory completely, instead favoring the development of instinctive taste.[101] He described this evolution of thought in his magazine *The Arts*, of which he was the sole editor. He used the magazine as his artistic mouthpiece, advocating for the modernist approach to art. He espoused ideas as radical as that of artistic theory leading to the demise of artistic creativity.[102] He sought an American art tradition that was birthed separately than that in Europe. Unlike Woodbury, Field did not look to European movements such as Fauvism and Cubism to define American modernism. Field looked to the past, using Americana outside of the academic tradition to seek a unique future for American artists.

[99] Jeffers, 3.
[100] Bolger, 93.
[101] The Editor [Hamilton E. Field], "The Art Student," The Arts, vol. 1 (August - September 1921), 46.
[102] Bolger, 93.

Rather contradictorily to his teaching, Field's own work was relatively conservative in comparison to that of his pupils. Two of his works *Self-Portrait*, circa 1898 [figure 5] and *The Card Players* [figure 6], circa 1920, show little evolution towards the avant-garde fringes of modernism that he preached to his students. In the card players, one can observe a marked inspiration of post-Impressionism and the likes of Paul Cézanne, but hardly the innovations of Cubism or Fauvism.[103] In this painting, three figures sit around a table playing cards, and there is nothing particularly abstract about the composition. The soft colors of the background blend together, creating a uniquely post-Impressionistic mood within the work. His work from the 1910s has been compared to James McNeill Whistler in its tonalist qualities. Art historian Doreen Bolger compares Field's *River Front, New York, in Winter*, circa 1912 [figure 7] to Whistler's landscapes, citing the relative uniformity of the subtle color palette as the chief cause for comparison.[104] Overarchingly, scholars attribute this to his greater affinity for teaching and patronage than for painting itself. Field was radical in his philosophy, but artistically rather tame.

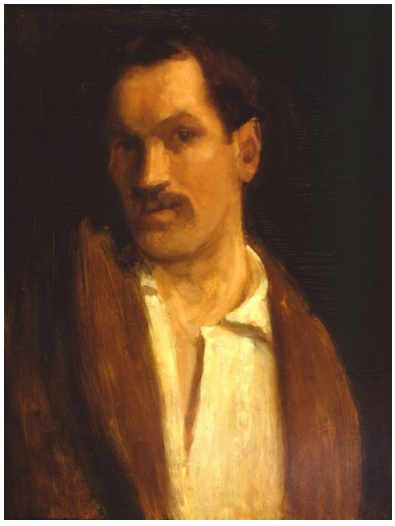

Fig. 5: Hamilton Easter Field, *Self Portrait*, ca.1898. Oil on panel, 24 x 18 in. Portland Museum of Art, 1979.13.15.

[103] Bolger, 86.
[104] Bolger, 85.

Fig. 6: Hamilton Easter Field, The Card Players, ca. 1920.Oil on canvas, 35 1/4 x 52 5/8 in. Portland Museum of Art: Hamilton Easter Field Art Foundation Collection, Gift of Barn Gallery Associates, Inc., Ogunquit, Maine, 1979.13.16.

Fig. 7: Hamilton Easter Field. *River Front, New York, in Winter*, ca. 1912. Oil on canvas, 12 13/16 x 17 15/16 in. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Robert Laurent, 22.89.

The Feud

Unsurprisingly, it was while Field was buying up fishing shacks on the other side of the cove that Field and Woodbury's feud began. The extent of their tiff is described in Tragard's research notes for her subsequent book on the colony, now housed at the Archives of American Art. In official records, their differences are glossed over, but Tragard's off-the-record notes reveal a much more serious disagreement. According to David Woodbury, Charles Woodbury's son, the two men's disagreement began in 1908 following Field's return from Paris. Woodbury accused Field of attempting to seduce his son, which was followed by the threat of a libel suit on Field's part.[105] The hate between the two men devolved to the precipice of violence when a man with a revolver showed up at Woodbury's door one night, apparently sent by Field.[106] Although no one was shot, this incident highlights the level of mutual hate between the men. On a broader scale, it demonstrates the contentious relationship, even among modernists. Not every modernist artist was a free-loving bohemian, and Woodbury's conservatism was evident in comparison to some of his peers.

Field's sexuality was not much discussed during his lifetime, but he was widely posthumously reported to be gay. In 1986, his student and close friend Lloyd Goodrich discussed Field's sexuality with a reporter. In the interview, Goodrich stated, "What you fundamentally have to understand about Ham Field was that he was a homosexual. The townsfolk of Ogunquit [Maine] didn't understand him, and his behavior occasionally scandalized them."[107] Field's

[105]Barn Gallery selected records, 1966–1987, Archives of American Art. Box 1, Folder 35. Henry Strater Tape Notes.
[106] Barn Gallery selected records, 1966–1987, Archives of American Art. Box 1, Folder 35. Notes from Margot Phillips tape of David Woodbury, 1971, tape 1 side 1.
[107] Jeffers, 26.

sexuality would have likely been scandalous to Woodbury, who was a conservative, and resented Field's liberalism. In her notes, Tragard describes the difference between the two men as not merely a clash of personalities, but of ideologies as well.[108] Field's outlandish behavior in public, including the painting out nudes outdoors in full view of Woodbury's pupils, was to his great chagrin. There were reports of Field's students intentionally messing with Woodbury and his students. Tragard reports that one summer, a nude model wearing nothing but a kimono ran across to Woodbury's side of the cove and sunbathed naked on his front lawn. This incident is rumored to have caused Woodbury to instruct his students to stay away from Field's side of the cove.

Despite the men's personal differences, it was in their pedagogical philosophies that they differed the most significantly.[109] Woodbury was an academic modernist, inspired by post-Impressionist art and maintaining a general sense of realism. After studying in France and leaving refreshed and inspired by their art colonies, Field was inspired to establish an entirely new style of modernism, one that was uniquely American. He saw folk and colonial painting as a point of inspiration for this, the perfect antidote for the prescriptive style of art education he felt was suppressing individualism. He was looking to the nation's past to find the basic tenets for a future defining artistic style.

Field's Pupils

The students and artists who passed through Field's school were many and varied, but the one thing they had in common was their reverence of Field. Many of the budding artists who flocked

[108] Barn Gallery selected records, 1966–1987, Archives of American Art. Box 1, Folder 35.
[109] Tragard, 37.

to Field's school also studied at the Arts Student League in New York. The school was founded in 1875 by a former teacher from the National Academy of Design after frustrations with the older, more conservative, and established Academy.[110] Among these students that flocked northward were Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Niles Spencer, Stefan Hirsch, Adelaide J. Lawson and Lloyd Goodrich. Beyond his students, Field also convinced artists he rubbed shoulders with in New York to summer with him in Ogunquit. In Brooklyn, he owned Ardsley studios and the Ardsley School of Modern Art, both of which he ran out of his childhood home in Brooklyn Heights.[111] Among the artists he showed at his studio that he was able to bring to Ogunquit were Marsden Hartley, Robert Laurent, and Bernard Karfiol, all of whom would become highly regarded American modernists.[112]

Hartley credits Field with introducing him to folk art as an inspirational source for his art. His visit to Ogunquit in 1917 can be linked to the genesis of his experimentation in reverse painting on glass.[113] Hartley's 1917 *Sill Life* [figure 8] demonstrates an increasing familiarity with this complex technique. In this work, Hartley paints a still life of a basket of flowers sitting atop a simple table. The flowers are all red, white, and blue, further emphasizing the notion of nation inherent in the work. In both medium and subject matter, the work evokes an Americana sense of folk culture imbued by Field's affinity for Maine's vernacular folk art.

[110] Cummings, Paul. "The Art Students League. Part I." *Archives of American Art Journal* 13, no. 1 (1973): 1.
[111] Bolger, 97.
[112] Murphy, 88.
[113] Bolger, 96.

Fig. 8: Marsden Hartley, *Still Life*, 1917. Oil on glass mounted on board, 16 1/2 x 16 in. (41.9 x 40.6 cm). Private collection.

Field's most lasting legacy can be seen not within his own work, but his profound influence over his pupils and visitors in Ogunquit. Within each of them, he instilled his deep appreciation of the folk culture of Maine, one perhaps partly imagined by him, but made real through his teaching. Maine called to Field with its vernacular architecture that reminded him of a simpler time, one he never actually experienced due to his privileged upbringing. The folk painting of Maine held sway not just over Field, but over his pupils as well. Field was a teacher, but also a steward of American culture, bringing a renewed appreciation for uniquely American art forms that were previous dismissed for breaking with formal academicism. Kuniyoshi, Field's Japanese-born star pupil, presents perhaps the greatest argument for Field's Maine instruction as being vital in shaping American modernism. Kuniyoshi's story is fascinating, highlight at once debates in American art over class, race, and even immigration.

Chapter IV: Yasuo Kuniyoshi: Establishing a New Norm

Despite its status as a nation of immigrants, the vision of who qualified as an American artist was still narrowly defined when Field first arrived in Ogunquit. During the summer of 1918, Field first invited Yasuo Kuniyoshi to stay at the Summer School of Graphic Art, unknowingly providing the inspiration for an artist who would redefine public perception of what American art was, shaping the field of modern art in the process. Kuniyoshi's paintings, particularly those executed in the first part of his career, were inspired by the simplicity of vernacular Maine architecture, folk art and pastoralism, and blended these with cubist and futurist ideas to create a modern sensibility all his own. The rich cultural and visual tradition of Maine inspired Kuniyoshi, allowing him to channel the nostalgia of times past while simultaneously nodding towards the avant-garde future of art that lay ahead. The folk art that Kuniyoshi encountered in Ogunquit served as an artistic tie to help him create an American artistic identity at a time when he was barred from gaining citizenship, while at the same time helping him to create a new hybrid Japanese American artistic style all his own.

The Young Artist Comes to America

Artists like Kuniyoshi were exactly the demographic of people who threatened the type of students at Woodbury's school. The Victorian middle and upper classes were plagued with worry about this new influx of immigrants threatening the status quo and responded to this threat through policy. The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, followed by the Immigration Act of 1924, both of which served as barriers to Asian immigrants hoping to gain citizenship.[114]

[114] ShiPu Wang, "Japan against Japan: U.S. Propaganda and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Identity Crisis." *American Art* 22, no. 1 (2008): 31.

Even artists, who are typically thought of as culturally progressive, felt the threat of immigration. This fear is exemplified by a quote by Eliot Clark, former president of the National Academy of Design. The National Academy, the cultural arm of the old guard, was unsettled by immigration in New York. Clark is quoted as saying "The foreign population in New York has increased immeasurably, each nationality congregating in a separate quarter of the lower city… Writers, artists, adventurers, strays from all parts of the country championed the cause of the underprivileged, of who indeed they were a part… The old New Yorker was passing. Traditional culture was taboo."[115] While many people were embracing foreign influence in the dawn of the twentieth century, it was apparent that many continued to adamantly resist and fear it.

Within the context of this fear of immigration, Kuniyoshi sailed to Vancouver from Japan in 1906.[116] Kuniyoshi (1889–1953) had grown up in Okayama, Japan, the son of a working-class family. His father, a hardworking man who still managed to imbue the value of the arts into his son was the head of a rickshaw union in his hometown. At the age of sixteen, Kuniyoshi left Japan alone, preferring to work in North America over joining the Japanese army.[117] Once in Vancouver, he worked and saved enough to head south to Los Angeles, where he enrolled in high school and eventually art school. However, wanting to make a name for himself in the arts, in 1910, Kuniyoshi decided to move to New York, a city that he believed would be more conducive to the development of his artistic practice.[118]

[115] Francis, 28.
[116] Tom Wolf, The *Artistic Journey of Yasuo Kuniyoshi*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2015, 18.
[117] Wolf, 18.
[118] Jason Stieber, "The Yasuo Kuniyoshi Papers." *Archives of American Art Journal* 54, no. 1 (2015): 66.

After spending years bouncing around New York art schools, including a brief stint at the National Academy of Design, Kuniyoshi settled at the Art Students League in 1916, where he received a scholarship that allowed him to study there until 1920.[119] Among his classmates was Lloyd Goodrich, another future Field prodigy. The two men studied under Kenneth Hayes Miller. Miller had a passion for the old masters that initially ignited Kuniyoshi's interest in Western art,[120] but the two would later clash with over their differing views of Asian art. Miller was a reductionist of its merits, calling it "two-dimensional," a judgement that would eventually cause a rift between the two men when they were both professors at the League.[121]

Kuniyoshi's Maine Summers

In the spring of 1917, Kuniyoshi exhibited two paintings at the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists. It was there that he had his first of many encounters with Field. Field was immediately drawn to Kuniyoshi's work, which he saw as a perfect fusion of the artist's two cultures. Later writing about Kuniyoshi's practice, Field explained "Yasuo Kuniyoshi ... has expressed the ideal of modern Japan and of modern America as he has read them fused together in his own heart."[122] An avid collector of Japanese art, Field was warmly receptive to the foundational properties that Japanese art was actively contributing to American modernism. During this initial encounter Field invited Kuniyoshi to Ogunquit for the following summer, a trip that would change Kuniyoshi's trajectory and help to define the artist's early work.

---

[119] Myers, Jane and Tom Wolf. *The shores of a dream: Yasuo Kuniyoshi's early work in America*. Amon Carter Museum, 1996, 22.
[120] Stieber.
[121] Wolf, 19–20.
[122] Gail Levin, "Between Two Worlds: Folk Culture, Identity, and the American Art of Yasuo Kuniyoshi." *Archives of American Art Journal* 43, no. 3/4 (2003): 2.

Kuniyoshi spent the summer of 1918 in Ogunquit at Hamilton Easter Field's art school, and Maine became one of his chief artistic muses and would remain so into the 1920s. While in Ogunquit, Kuniyoshi painted *Thurnscoe, Maine,* 1918, a dark meditation on landscape. Author Jane Myers compares this early Kuniyoshi piece with Woodbury's landscape practice. She describes both as painterly, but goes on to differentiate, saying that "where Woodbury portrayed a specific house, and virtually a specific wave, Kuniyoshi's *Thurnscoe, Maine* is much more generalized. Moody and dark with a deliberate eschewal of bright color…"[123] Already, Kuniyoshi's work was beginning to demonstrate the avant-garde inclinations of Field's folk-inspired modernism.

As Kuniyoshi spent several of the following summers in Ogunquit, his affinity for American folk culture began to develop further. During the late 1910a and early1920s, Field served as Kuniyoshi's chief patron and supporter, even allowing him to reside in one of his Brooklyn properties during the remainder of the year when he was not painting in Maine.[124] With Field exerting such a heavy influence in Kuniyoshi's life, it is no surprise that the young artist shared in his patron's love of American folk culture. Kuniyoshi's interest in American folk art was not merely reflected in his work, but in his collecting practices as well. Records describe Kuniyoshi and his fellow Field students' passion for collecting American folk art. By 1924, his collection was large enough that he was asked to lend two pieces to an exhibition of early American vernacular work at the Whitney Studio Club, a precursor to the Whitney Museum of American

[123] Myers, 25.
[124] Levin, 4.

Art. Among the pieces he lent were a painting of a train and a carved wooden cow.[125] Writing of the implications of these loans, Gail Levin says "His loans showed how profoundly Kuniyoshi had been assimilated into his new cultural environment, since the show featured works of folk art from collections assembled by other contemporary artists and was selected and arranged by the artist Henry Schnakenberg for Juliana Force, the club's director."[126] Kuniyoshi was not the only contemporary artist at the time collecting folk art, but was praised for his collection because of its indication that he had "assimilated" into the American artistic culture of the time.

In 2015, Kuniyoshi scholar Tom Wolf directly credited Maine with providing him with the "artistic breakthrough to his first individual style."[127] *Maine Family*, circa1922–23[figure 9], as the title suggests, serves as a meditation on the folk culture and art in Maine that Kuniyoshi was especially drawn to. In the painting, a mother and two children sit outside a red house, each figure unnaturally proportioned, both within themselves and in relation to the buildings behind them. The unnatural proportions and flatness of the figures harken back to early colonial portraiture, specifically early American depictions of children. Additionally, the harsh geometry of the vernacular architecture, colonial houses and barns, serves as a purposeful simplification of the convention of academic painting.[128]

[125] Levin, 4.
[126] Levin 4.
[127] Wolf, 26.
[128] Wolf, 26.

Fig. 9: Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Maine Family*, ca. 1922–23. Oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 24 1/8 in. The Phillips Collection, 1100.

Kuniyoshi's 1923 work *Child* [figure 10] bears similar marks of folk inspiration. Much like the figures in *Maine Family*, *Child* depicts a flat, unnaturally proportioned child posing for a portrait. This work, however, was unique in that it was an intimate portrait of the individual child, bearing striking resemblance to the stiffly posed colonial children's portraits. With a red curtain and a vase in the background, the unnaturally posed nature of the sitter is evident. Jane Myers makes an apt observation about this work, writing *"*Kuniyoshi's artistic fascination with young children is characteristic, and it suggests that he had some sort of identification with them. Certainly, the combination of naivete and maturity of a child, the sense of sophistication coupled with disingenuousness, is found in much of Kuniyoshi's art of this period. A similar feeling was also present in eighteenth and nineteenth century American folk art, which included many

examples of children formally standing for their portraits."[129] Painted five years after his initial stay in Ogunquit, it is safe to assume that Kuniyoshi drew inspiration from the art that he encountered and collected in Maine when developing his early style.

Fig. 10: Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Child*, 1923. Oil on linen, 30 1/8 x 24 3/16in. (76.5 × 61.4 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, 55.1.

American art historian Wanda M. Corn has theorized extensively on the rise in appreciation of folk art during the twentieth century. She writes that "the conversation around folk art focused on its being 'ours' rather than 'others.' The appetite for an indigenous folk, while primitivizing and romanticizing, expressed a desire for an imagined blood relationship to a national past."[130] Much like American-born artists looking to early American art for ties to a cultural past, it is possible that Kuniyoshi was attracted to American folk art to cement his artistic identity as

[129] Myers, 31.
[130] Levin, 4.

American at a time when attaining citizenship was impossible. Levin further theorizes on this point, writing, “this was just the kind of relationship to American "roots" that Kuniyoshi perhaps hoped to forge for himself through his passion for collecting America's folk art.”[131] It is not a stretch to imagine the hostilities to foreigners during the early twentieth century would have contributed to Kuniyoshi’s desire to “feel” American.

Caught Between Two Cultures

Critics of Kuniyoshi’s work could do little to help themselves from commenting on Kuniyoshi’s race when discussing his art. While there was the distinct presence of American folk and vernacular motifs in Kuniyoshi’s early period, equally as present were Japanese forms and ideas. American folk and colonial art were not the only cultural primitivisms that interested Kuniyoshi, and the artist’s departure from his home country at a young age only fueled his interest in connecting with a culture that was slowly disappearing and growing more foreign to him. In his lifetime, Kuniyoshi returned to Japan only once, in 1931 for his father’s death.[132] It was during this year that Japanese folk culture became of interest to the artist, as evidenced by some of his paintings of the early 1930s

In Japanese *Toy Tiger and Odd Objects,* 1932 [figure 11], Kuniyoshi paints a still life of several objects arranged on a wooden table. A brightly colored yellow and black toy tiger stands predominantly on the left side of the table, clearly the focal point of the piece. This piece can be read as an attempt to reconnect with the culture he had left that now felt foreign as Japan rapidly modernized. Describing his trip to Japan in 1931, Kuniyoshi explained to a journalist that he

[131] Levin, 4.
[132] Levin, 2.

"'really felt foreign…My art was condemned as being too European. I was told I was a barbarian and had lost respect for my people. I was criticized for not observing the elaborate Japanese formality and etiquette of dealing with people.'"[133] The toy tiger, a folk toy known as *Kurashiki hariko*, provides a link to the artist's childhood, providing a subtle nod at an attempted reconnection to Japan.[134]

Fig. 11: Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Japanese Toy Tiger and Odd Objects*, 1932. The Fukutake Collection, Okayama, Japan.

With the onset of World War II, any embracing of his cultural identity and artistic expression of that was quashed. Kuniyoshi was desperate to prove allegiance to the country that he had called home for the past three decades. On December 8, 1941, American residents of Japanese descent were declared "enemy aliens."[135] In order to prove his allegiance to America, Kuniyoshi took on various patriotic artistic commissions. He was recruited by the Office of War Information (OWI) to make propaganda drawings, as well as by the Art Students League to

[133] Levin, 3.
[134] Levin, 3.
[135] Wang, 1.

create caricatures of Axis leaders for their United Nations Ball in 1942.[136] His mural, a larger-than-life caricature of Hirohito [figure 12], took the racialization of the enemy to a profound level. In exaggerating the emperor's traditionally "Asian" features, including depicting him with narrowly squinted eyes, Kuniyoshi contributed to the racialization of the American enemy, but also of himself. It is this propaganda series that most profoundly demonstrates the two worlds Kuniyoshi was caught between.

Fig. 12: Brown Brothers (New York, NY) photographer, *Art Students League faculty seated around a table in front of a mural*, 1943. Miscellaneous photographs collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2705.

A letter contained in the Yasuo Kuniyoshi collection of the Archives of American art sheds further light on the contradictions that surrounded Kuniyoshi's later propaganda work. On September 11, 1942, he wrote to Joseph Le Boit, the head of the Artists for Victory propaganda project. In this letter he explains,

[136] Wolf, 62.

> when I saw the Newsletter…I immediately wrote to the Artists for Victory asking for complete information concerning this competition. Since, as a member of an American Group I am automatically a member of Artists for Victory, I assumed that I was eligible for this competition. Two days ago I received a rather snappy reply, of which I am enclosing a copy. Neither of the announcements of the National War Poster Competition mentioned such discrimination as stated, "no members of the nations of our enemies are eligible to enter," by your assistant secretary[137]

Through his writings, we see a refusal to accept the prejudices of Kuniyoshi's adoptive country. After his years of service to the American artistic landscape, this betrayal by Artists for Victory is palpable, and Kuniyoshi's indignation in this letter is evident. These letters highlight the persistent struggle for identity throughout Kuniyoshi's artistic career.

Throughout Kuniyoshi's life and career, there existed a push and pull between a desire to be American, a desire to reconnect with Japan as he remembered, and a decisive need to disconnect himself from his roots during the second World War. Kuniyoshi's identity was in constant flux, both within himself and in how he was perceived by those around him. In her book *Making Race: Modernism and "Racial Art" in America*, Jacqueline Francis theorizes Kuniyoshi's unique positionality as a Japanese American artist in the early twentieth century. He was in a precarious position, an American artist who did not have the birth status or cultural ties to firmly cement his place within this sphere. His art toed the line between American and Japanese, and his figures are demonstrative of this tug of war. Francis describes this cultural hybridity as evidenced in his early work, writing, "whiteness or white "American-ness" is destabilized as the artist actively

[137] Archives of American Art, Yasuo Kuniyoshi Papers, Box 1, Folder 20: Artists for Victory 1942–1944: slide 3.

queries race and racial purities. Inspired by colonial painting and American folk-art styles, Kuniyoshi did not adopt their chalk whitening of bodies; color was just another visual element available for modernist abstraction. Brown shading suggests less skin tanned by sun and more burnished and varnished wooden surfaces. As a result, skin, a critical site of race and ethnicity, seems less human, natural, and biological and instead more material and synthetic in appearance."[138] His paintings depicting the largely white population of Maine, do not center whiteness in the same way that early American folk art does. His manipulation of the motifs of his early period embraces Maine and its culture, but also riff on it in a way that is uniquely his own.[139] Francis concludes that "Kuniyoshi's figures resist the binaries of the conceptualized Orient and Occident, and instead open the discussion of the complicated spaces in between."[140] It is this "in-between" that Maine helped Kuniyoshi develop. Outside of the prying eyes and modernization of New York, Kuniyoshi was able to develop an American style that was uniquely his own. He was inspired by his mentor Field's love of folk art and architecture, but also reconciled that with his own cultural heritage. By incorporating the early American motifs he encountered in Maine into his paintings of the 1920s, Kuniyoshi legitimized himself as an American through his art. This early establishment of himself as an American, despite lack of citizenship, made it possible for him to explore his connect to Japan without straying from his allegiance to America during a time of racial precarity.

[138] Jacqueline Francis, *Making Race: Modernism and "Racial Art" in America*. University of Washington Press, 2012, 99.
[139] Francis, 100.
[140] Francis, 95.

Kuniyoshi in the Public Eye

Kuniyoshi's participation in a 1929 show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, titled *Nineteen Living Americans* started the work of cementing his legacy in modern art as a distinctly American. This show was revolutionary in that it judged artists as American not by their race, but by the country in which they made art. Kuniyoshi's *Boy Stealing Fruit* [figure 13] caused quite a stir among critics, many of whom questioned whether he deserved the spot in the show over "truly" American artists such as George Luks and Childe Hassam.[141] Despite Japanese art being evidently foundational to both European and American modernism, the idea of a Japanese man making American art was too outrageous for many people. Although met by xenophobia, this exhibition began the process of legitimizing Kuniyoshi as a truly American modernist. The inclusion of *Boy Stealing Fruit* in this show is no coincidence, as it combined many aspects of American folk and colonial art. Within it, sharp angles intersect as a boy, resembling the colonial childhood portraits of old New England, steals a banana from a bowl. Behind him, out an open window, the vernacular architecture of Maine is prominently figured in bright yellows and whites. By harkening back to colonial America, Kuniyoshi was able to cement his roots as firmly American at the MoMA show.

[141] Levin, 11.

Fig. 13: Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Boy Stealing Fruit*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in. Columbus Museum of Art, 1931.194.

Arguably the biggest exhibition of Kuniyoshi's lifetime was his Whitney Museum of American Art retrospective, their first solo show of a living artist, in 1948.[142] At the center of the New York avant-garde, and the leading institution for modern American art, this recognition and inclusion by an exclusively American art museum was the final say in determining whether American modernism was ready to accept non-European immigrants. Through this show, exhibited only five years before the artist's death at age 63, Kuniyoshi's legacy was cemented in stone.

Eight years before this retrospective, Kuniyoshi gave a talk at the Whitney that served to foreshadow his eventual acceptance into the American cannon. In this address he said, "Cultural assimilation does take place…American art today is the product of a conglomeration of customs

[142] Wolf, 15.

and traditions of many peoples ... a culmination not only of native but [also of] foreign forces…If these artists [Degas and Van Gogh] did not find alien influence a menace, why should we?"[143] Within himself, Kuniyoshi recognized the possibility for multitudes. He saw himself as an American, but also had the desire to explore his cultural heritage. Through his artistic practice, Yasuo Kuniyoshi redefined American art, positioning American modernism to be an open practice, no longer closed off as the academic tradition before it had been.

Chapter V: Ogunquit's Modernist Legacy

At the center of this tangled web between Charles Woodbury, Hamilton Easter Field, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Lloyd Goodrich emerges Maine, a triumphant folk hero in the evolution of a uniquely American modernism. Like most artistic movements, there is no clear linear trajectory from Academic painting to American modernism, but a jumble of people and places that come together to form our story. Maine called to each of these characters for a different reason, providing an ideological battleground for American modernists to fight for their legacy. Modernists sought both the rejection of the status quo, but also a break from the European modernist tradition. In this unique search, Maine called to many trailblazers, providing a unique blend of isolation, landscape, and unmarred folk culture. To find a way forward, American modernist teachers and artists had to first journey to the past to seek a source of inspiration unmarred by neither industrialization nor academicism.

American Modernism Institutionalized: The Whitney Museum of American Art

The cultural reverberations of Ogunquit's modernist legacy were not only felt throughout Maine but extended to the cultural epicenter of American modernism: the Whitney Museum of

[143] Levin, 15.

American Art. Upon its founding in 1930, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney was firm in her belief that her institution should be dedicated to new American artists. In 1914, Whitney had established the museum's precursor, the Whitney Studio in Greenwich Village. In the following fifteen years, she amassed a collection of over five hundred pieces.[144] After the Metropolitan Museum of Art's rejection of Vanderbilt-Whitney's offered gift of her collection, the founding mission of the Whitney Museum of American Art was crystallized. From there on out, it was dedicated to focus exclusively on the art and artists of this country, presenting for them an alternative to the exclusive institutions that would not take emerging artists or modernists at all.[145]

In 1931, the Whitney opened the doors of its first permanent museum space at 10 West 8th Street.[146] Initial reviews lauded its cultural impact; for it was a museum that was the first of its kind. In an article written a year after its opening, art critic Dorothy Grafly wrote "it is one thing to erect a museum and then look around for art to fill it, but quite another to build in answer to demand, beginning literally with a gallery or two."[147] From its inception, the Whitney had its finger on the pulse of American art, changing with the times rather than retroactively deciding what was worthy of preservation. Grafly expands on this notion, noting that "The general policy of the new museum is to keep up with everything being done while it is being done, and to seek out new ability while acknowledging that already established. The definition of American art is necessarily flexible, as America has not yet emerged from her melting-pot stage of development. Pascin, one finds, is not admissible, but Simka Simkhovitch makes his bow as

[144] The Whitney Museum of American Art. History of the Whitney: Founding. Accessed May 6, 2024.
[145] The Whitney Museum of American Art. History of the Whitney: Founding. Accessed May 6, 2024.
[146] Dorothy Grafly, "The Whitney Museum of American Art." *The American Magazine of Art* 24, no. 2 (1932): 93.
[147] Grafly, 93.

an American."[148] The Whitney's admission of Russian immigrant Simkhovitch and Kuniyoshi as an American artist cemented their stance immigrant art was American art, setting forth a radical challenge to contemporary notions of authorship and belonging.

It is well documented that Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's artistic philosophy aligned with Hamilton Easter Field's Ogunquit pedagogy. Whitney was a chief benefactor for Field's publication *The Arts* after his untimely death, helping to prop up his modernist publication.[149] Many of Field's pupils would be welcomed into the museum's early collection, including Robert Laurent. Field's students, and through this, his artistic pedagogy, became instrumental to the pulse America's modernist art collection, as well as in its chief venue.

A Bridge Between Ogunquit and New York: Lloyd Goodrich

Between Ogunquit and New York, a familiar cast of characters emerge as a channel for modernist thought and art collection. Lloyd Goodrich, Kuniyoshi's former classmate at the Art Students League, as well as Field's early pupil, can be seen as the epicenter of this transformation. Goodrich was a leading figure in art during the twentieth century, a critic, curator, artist, and museum director, having perhaps one of the most tangible effects on the development of the Whitney's collecting and display practices.

Goodrich was born to a progressive family, one which instilled in him the ability to think about art with an open mind from a young age. Concerning his parents' political beliefs,

[148] Grafly, 94.
[149] Lloyd Goodrich and Garnett McCoy. "Lloyd Goodrich Reminisces: Part I." *Archives of American Art Journal* 20, no. 3 (1980): 10.

Goodrich recalls "On the Lloyd side of the family, my mother's side, there was a long tradition of liberalism; in fact, more than that, radicalism in many ways."[150] His parents, much like Field, Kuniyoshi, and the whole cast of characters at Ogunquit, felt a connection between progressive thought and nostalgia for Americana. In the same interview, Goodrich remembers his parents bringing home wagonfuls of antique furniture purchased from old farmhouses in the area.[151] Much like Field, an appreciation for American folk art and decorative arts helped to shape his artistic proclivities from a young age.

The 1913 Armory Show acted as a pivotal moment in the development of Goodrich's early artistic thought. In an interview with the Archives of American Art, he recalled;

> But very soon came something quite different, which was modern art. When the Armory Show came along in February 1913, I was still a senior in high school, but I was already convinced that I wanted to study painting. I remember going to the Armory Show. I think I must have gone three or four times, and to me this was a great revelation. Of course, it was completely contrary to everything I had seen previous to that time.[152]

One cannot credit a single show as the inspiration to a seminal art historian, but it is evident that this exhibition was a revolution in the creation of American modernist art and scholarship. Goodrich went on to reject the status quo of the academic tradition in art education, going so far as to call his year spent at the National Academy of Design in 1916 a "wasted year."[153] He much preferred his training at the Art Students League, where he would meet and befriend Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

---

[150] Goodrich, Lloyd, and Garnett McCoy, *Part I*, 4.
[151] Goodrich, Lloyd, and Garnett McCoy, *Part I*, 6.
[152] Goodrich, Lloyd, and Garnett McCoy, *Part I*, 7.
[153] Lloyd Goodrich and Garnett McCoy, *Part I*, 9.

In 1916 Goodrich met Field, who he credited with being "a remarkable man who has never been given the credit he deserves in the history of modern art in this country."[154] That summer, Field invited him to his school in Ogunquit, where Goodrich was introduced to Laurent, Bernard Karfiol, Abraham Walkowitz, Maurice Sterne, all of whom would become vanguards of American modernism.

Throughout his lifetime, Goodrich became a steward of the evolving Whitney Museum, serving in numerous roles until finally becoming director in 1958.[155] His friendship with Juliana Force, founding director of the Whitney, placed him in a prime position to witness the growth of the institution. In 1935, he began as a research curator at the Whitney, focusing on older American artists such as Winslow Homer. In 1947, he was appointed associate curator, a position he held while he curated Kuniyoshi's retrospective. From this position, he became associate director in 1948, and was finally appointed to director in 1958.[156] In these decades of service to the museum, he oversaw its development and held it accountable to its mission to champion a modern and expanded definition of American art.

In accordance with this mission, Goodrich and Force decided to break from their policy barring one man shows of living artists. They saw it as a restriction on their ability to say this was our field, that we should say, "We think this artist is important."[157]

---

[154] Goodrich, Lloyd, and Garnett McCoy, *Part I*, 9.
[155] "Lloyd Goodrich: A Chronology." *American Art Journal*, 109.
[156] "Lloyd Goodrich: A Chronology." 108–110.
[157] Lloyd Goodrich and Garnett McCoy, "Lloyd Goodrich Reminisces: Part II." *Archives of American Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (1983): 13.

Included in the 1948 retrospective was his 1921 painting *Boy with Cow* [figure 14]. In this work, Kuniyoshi draws on his experiences in Maine, portraying the quintessential farms that dot its landscape. As storm clouds encroach, a boy leads a cow inside, sheltering it from the ominous clouds that blanket the sky. The boy's bulky arms imply a life of field labor, and a nostalgia for rural life before the advent of industrialization. The 1920s marked a decade when tractors were introduced for widespread use in cultivation and plowing, tasks previously performed by hand. In giving the boy these bulging arms, Kuniyoshi evokes a yearning and nostalgia for the simple life so characteristic of Maine.[158] This work, and the retrospective as a whole, served as an acknowledgment of the cultural impact of Maine on forming a new kind of American artist: the immigrant artist. Ogunquit provided a key space for Kuniyoshi, an "untouched" vestige of American folk culture that he used to infuse his early work. It is only fitting that the art colony's impact would have representation at one of American modernism's defining exhibitions.

[158] This text builds upon an object label I wrote for this work when it was on display at the Colby College Museum of Art.

Fig. 14: Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Boy with Cow*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 16 1/8 x 20 in. Terra Foundation for American Art.

Ogunquit Today and Tomorrow

In Ogunquit today, vestiges of the town's past are visible nearly everywhere. The Ogunquit Museum of American Art, the Barn Gallery, and the Ogunquit Heritage Museum provide a tangible vestige of the former art colony's legacy. The state of Maine's nickname, "Vacationland," conjures up images of repose, a life lived outside of urban modernity. While Maine may not be the rural enclave it once was for these artists, traces of its rustic past remain, both within the state and within the walls of galleries worldwide. Within this legacy is also contained an immense tension. The story of the Ogunquit Artists Colony is a story about contestation about what American modernism fundamentally is. Ogunquit is a vital piece within the genealogy of modern art, a field which art historian Judith Zilczer has studied and written about. She writes, "The formation of early collections of modern art in the United States helped to validate and thereby shape the historical perspective through which

American modernism has been assessed."[159] Through this lens of study, we see the museums which steward the achievements of Ogunquit's modernists as genealogical tracers, helping us to piece together the genesis of American modernism.

In the narrow swath of land that comprised Perkins Cove, a microcosm of national debates over gender, class, immigration, industrialization, and the pedagogy of art itself emerged. The students of the two schools themselves represented the divide between American nervousness about the modern age and immigration, delicate aristocratic women fearful of the unknown on one side, and rugged immigrant, gay, and avant-garde artists on the other side. However, both camps sought inspiration from the landscape and vernacular folk art of Maine, drawn together by a common search for something new within the old. Woodbury was enchanted by the movement of the water, and Field was drawn to the folk art of yester-year. Together, the two schools' push and pull formed the legacy of an art colony that has lasting implications on American modernist art and institutions. Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Lloyd Goodrich, two of Field's most famous prodigies, have emerged at the forefront of this story, stewarding Ogunquit's legacy.

[159] Judith Zilczer "Beyond Genealogy: American Modernism in Retrospect." *American Art* 15, no. 1 (2001): 4.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Barn Gallery Associates selected records, 1966–1987. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Charles H. Woodbury papers, 1866–1939. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Downes, William Howe. "Charles Herbert Woodbury and His Work." *Brush and Pencil* 6, no. 1 (1900): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.2307/25505530.

Goodrich, Lloyd, and Garnett McCoy. "Lloyd Goodrich Reminisces: Part I." *Archives of American Art Journal* 20, no. 3 (1980): 3–18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1557291.

———. "Lloyd Goodrich Reminisces: Part II." *Archives of American Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (1983): 8–21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1557277.

Hamilton Easter Field papers, circa 1913–1966. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Kuhn, Walt. The story of the Armory Show, 1938. Walt Kuhn Family papers and Armory Show records, 1859-1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/story-armory-show-14549

Yasuo Kuniyoshi papers, 1906–2016, bulk 1920–1990. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Secondary Sources

Barratt, Carrie Rebora. "Nineteenth-Century American Folk Art." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/afkp/hd_afkp.htm.

Bolger, Doreen. “Hamilton Easter Field and His Contribution to American Modernism.” *American Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1988): 79–107. https://doi.org/10.2307/1594508.

Boyd, Carrie. *The Cove: Perkins Cove at Ogunquit, Maine*. Place of publication not identified: [publisher not identified], 1976.

Brown, Milton W. “Walt Kuhn’s Armory Show.” *Archives of American Art Journal* 27, no. 2 (1987): 3–11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1557428.

Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Ed. Wlad Godzich, Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Burnham, Helen, Sarah E. Thompson, and Jane E. Braun. *Looking East: Western Artists and the Allure of Japan*. Boston: MFA Publications, 2014.

Denenberg, Thomas Andrew, Amy Kurtz Lansing, and Susan Dandly. *Call of the Coast: Art Colonies of New England*. Portland Maine: Portland Museum of Art, 2009.

Francis, Jacqueline. *Making Race: Modernism and “Racial Art" in America*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012.

Goodrich, Lloyd. “Yasuo Kuniyoshi--1894-1953.” *College Art Journal* 13, no. 1 (1953): 3–5. http://www.jstor.org/stable/772385.

Grafly, Dorothy. “The Whitney Museum of American Art.” *The American Magazine of Art* 24, no. 2 (1932): 92–102. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23935956.

Green, William. “Hamilton Easter Field (1873-1922).” *Impressions*, no. 8 (1983). http://www.jstor.org/stable/42597617.

Jeffers, Wendy. “Hamilton Easter Field: The Benefactor From Brooklyn.” *Archives of American Art Journal* 50, no. 1/2 (2011): 26–37. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23025821.

Kevin, Brian. What Was the Art Colony? Downeast Magazine, May 2023.

Levin, Gail. “Between Two Worlds: Folk Culture, Identity, and the American Art of Yasuo Kuniyoshi.” *Archives of American Art Journal* 43, no. 3/4 (2003): 2–17.

Murphy, Kevin D. *Early Folk Art Collecting in Maine: Its Contributions to Modernism*. *The Magazine Antiques (1971)*. Vol. 174. New York: Brant Publications, Incorporated, 2008.https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=e40e0cb8-1f22-48a3-b43a-9e142eca38ab%40redis

Myers, Jane and Tom Wolf. *The shores of a dream: Yasuo Kuniyoshi’s early work in America*. Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996.

Perloff, Marjorie “The avant-garde phase of American modernism.” In The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism. Ed. by Walter Kalaidjian. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; 195–218.

Ross, Zachary. “Rest for the Weary: American Nervousness and the Aesthetics of Repose.” in *Women on the Verge: The Culture of Neurasthenia in 19th-Century America*, Ed. Katherine Williams. Palo Alto: Stanford University Museum of Art, 2005: 21-35.

Samu, Margaret. “Impressionism: Art and Modernity.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm (October 2004)

Sawyer, Charles H. “Charles Woodbury: Painter and Teacher.” *The American Magazine of Art* 29, no. 8 (1936): 520–54. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23951229.

Shain, Charles E. and Samuella Shain. *The Maine Reader: the Down East experience from 1614 to the present* (Nonpareil edition). Boston: Godine Publishers, 1997.

Shipp, Steve. *American Art Colonies, 1850–1930: A Historical Guide to America’s Original Art Colonies and Their Artists.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Singal, Daniel Joseph. “Towards a Definition of American Modernism.” *American Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1987): 7–26. https://doi.org/10.2307/2712627.

Seitz, William. “What's Happened to Art? An Interview with Marcel Duchamp on Present Consequences of New York's 1913 Armory Show.” Vogue (New York), no. 4 (15 February 1963), 11.

Stieber, Jason. “The Yasuo Kuniyoshi Papers.” *Archives of American Art Journal* 54, no. 1 (2015): 66–69. https://doi.org/10.1086/683152.

Taylor, Michael R. “Marcel Duchamp’s Nude Descending a Staircase [No. 2] and the 1913 Armory Show Scandal Revisited.” *Archives of American Art Journal* 51, no. 3/4 (2012): 50–65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43155387.

Tragard, Louise., Patricia E. Hart, and W. L. Copithorne. *A Century of Color, 1886–1986: Ogunquit, Maine’s Art Colony*. Ogunquit, ME: Barn Gallery Associates, 1987.

Wang, ShiPu. “Japan against Japan: U.S. Propaganda and Yasuo Kuniyoshi’s Identity Crisis.” *American Art* 22, no. 1 (2008): 28–51. https://doi.org/10.1086/587915.

Weinberg, H. Barbara. “American Impressionism.” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/aimp/hd_aimp.htm (October 2004)

Whitney Museum of American Art. History of the Whitney: Founding. Accessed May 6, 2024.https://whitney.org/about/history#:~:text=The%20Whitney%20Museum%20of%20American,at%2075th%20Street%20in%201963.

Winkiel, Laura. *Modernism: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2017.

Wolf, Tom. *The Artistic Journey of Yasuo Kuniyoshi*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2015.

Zilczer, Judith. “Beyond Genealogy: American Modernism in Retrospect.” *American Art* 15, no. 1 (2001): 4–9. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109369.