

# Alfred Thompson Bricher

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A specialist in marine and coastal paintings, Bricher was celebrated for his precise depictions of waves breaking at the shoreline. A largely self-taught artist, Bricher studied the works of artists he met during sketching tours and opened a studio in Boston around 1859. In 1866 he travelled to the upper Mississippi River Valley in the American Midwest. In that year he established a long relationship with L. Prang and Company, a Boston firm who published chromolithographs after his paintings. These inexpensive colour reproductions brought him wide recognition among the American art public.

Bricher's early paintings were panoramic views painted with the celebratory spirit and exacting detail that characterise the Hudson River school. With his growing success as a landscape painter, Bricher moved to New York City around 1868. During that time he began to paint coastal scenes in watercolour and oil. Bricher travelled widely in search of subjects, journeying throughout the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. His later marine paintings were characterised by the same precise, realistic detail as his early depictions of the countryside, now applied to masterful renderings of curling waves and sunlit water. Bricher's paintings of low, flat horizons and glowing light, rendered with subtle brushwork, were characteristic of the emerging style of American landscape painting in the mid-nineteenth-century, which championed muted, light-filled compositions over the sublime grandeur and pictorial drama of Hudson River school painting.

# Thomas Cole

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Thomas Cole was famous during his lifetime for his unparalleled portrayals of the American wilderness, which were extraordinary feats of poetic and allegorical invention as well as topographical accuracy. Cole has been designated as the founding figure of the Hudson River school, the first native American landscape movement, which drew on the conventions of English aesthetic theory regarding the sublime and the picturesque to inform its tendency toward naturalistic depiction and its nationalist pictorial rhetoric.

Trained as an engraver in England, Cole received sporadic artistic training in the United States, which culminated with drawing classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. By 1825 he was living in New York, and the rugged vistas of the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River Valley inspired him to focus on the natural splendour of the region as a subject. He in turn inspired a subsequent generation of American painters to do the same. Influenced by European artists who faced similar struggles in their efforts to elevate landscape painting in the eyes of the public, critics, and academics, Cole imbued his depictions of nature with grand themes – spirituality, the frailty of human life, and the cyclical history of civilisation itself.

At the time of his death, Cole was beloved by his fellow American artists, who celebrated his genius in fusing nature and symbolism in landscape art.

# Thomas Doughty

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Thomas Doughty was among the first American painters to devote himself wholly to landscape painting. A native of Philadelphia, Doughty was a self-taught artist who turned to painting full-time in 1820. Doughty specialised in river views, which he exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and at the National Academy of Design in New York. He painted topographical views (specialising in river views), as well as more imaginative works inspired by the landscape paintings of French seventeenth-century artist Claude Lorrain (1604–82).

In 1832 Doughty moved to Boston, Massachusetts. In 1837–38 he briefly visited England, where he came under the influence of English Romantic landscape painting. Doughty's work thereafter is characterised by darker colours and a greater interest in the textural properties of paint. On his return, Doughty settled in New York City, which was emerging as the nation's artistic and economic capital. Despite ill-health, he travelled widely to paint picturesque settings throughout the northeastern United States.

Between 1845 and 1847, Doughty exhibited his works in London and Paris, but his generalised, dream-like landscapes found little favour among mid-century American critics and patrons as tastes shifted toward a greater realism with the emergence of a younger generation of landscape painters led by Thomas Cole. Doughty relocated several times to better his fortunes, but died destitute in New York City at the age of sixty-three. Today, Doughty is honoured as an important precursor to the Hudson River school, America's first native school of landscape painting.

# Sanford Robinson Gifford

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One of nineteenth-century America's most accomplished landscape painters, Gifford painted wide-ranging views saturated by sunlight and atmospheric colour. Gifford was a native of Hudson, New York, the centre of the region that inspired the Hudson River school. He taught himself to paint primarily by studying paintings by the movement's founder, Thomas Cole, and by sketching in the mountains of New York and Massachusetts.

From 1855 to 1857, Gifford travelled throughout Europe, where he was influenced by the work of the old masters, contemporary artists, and the English Romantic painters. However, this experience also left him determined to resist any tendency to let an artistic school "usurp the place of Nature" in his own work. Natural light, rendered as a unifying, mystical force, became the main subject of his paintings. Gifford once wrote that "landscape painting is air painting," which underscores the painter's devotion to the handling of light and atmosphere.

In addition to his frequent excursions throughout the northeastern United States, Gifford travelled to Europe, the Near East, the American West, the Canadian Pacific region and Alaska. His paintings of these wide-ranging locales were highly popular and lucrative. An elected member of New York's prestigious National Academy of Design, Gifford was particularly popular among his fellow landscape painters who also worked in the famed Tenth Street Studio Building. After his death at the age of fifty-seven, Gifford was honoured with a retrospective exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, the first such exhibition in the institution's history.

# William Groombridge

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William Groombridge is considered one of America's first professional landscape painters. English-born Groombridge is believed to have studied under James Lambert (1725–c.1779) at the Royal Academy of Arts, one of several London venues at which he exhibited his paintings between 1773 and 1790. He immigrated to the United States around 1793 and settled in Philadelphia. There, Groombridge made portraits and miniatures in addition to local landscape views. He also supported himself by teaching art. In 1804, the artist and his wife moved to Baltimore, Maryland, where he remained until the end of his life.

Groombridge brought to his American landscape subjects the conventions of the English picturesque tradition, in which a benign nature is presented in calm, idyllic images composed with a gradual recession into space, framing elements, and delicate lighting and colour. He belonged to an early generation of American landscape painters, many of them trained in England, who struggled to reconcile Old World ideals with the reality of American scenery. However, recent scholarship has demonstrated the significant achievements of these artists in laying a foundation for their successors as they created the first artistic interpretations of the American landscape.

Compared with the dramatic wilderness paintings of the Hudson River school, the landscape movement that would flower in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the works of Groombridge and his contemporaries appear tame and conventional.

# William Stanley Haseltine

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A member of the second generation of the Hudson River school, Haseltine is best known for his depictions of America's rocky northeastern coast. Born into a prosperous Philadelphia family, he studied with German landscape painter Paul Weber (1823–1916), who introduced him to the disciplined drawing technique associated with the famed Düsseldorf Academy.

Haseltine completed his education at Harvard College and in 1854 travelled with Weber to Düsseldorf, where he joined the thriving colony of American expatriate artists that had gathered there. He travelled in Europe before settling in New York City in 1859. Haseltine established himself in the Tenth Street Studio Building, which housed many of the most important American landscape painters of the day.

Haseltine made sketches along the coast of the northeastern United States. His paintings are remarkable for their intense focus on rock formations, the subject of great popular and scientific interest among mid-nineteenth-century Americans. The scientific precision of Haseltine's works reflects the influence of English art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900), who urged artists to depict nature in painstaking detail.

In 1866 Haseltine moved permanently to Italy. He made several extended visits to the United States thereafter – travelling as far as the American West and Alaska – but remained a lifelong member of the American expatriate community in Rome. A respected figure in both Europe and America, he exhibited a continued interest in rock formations throughout his long career.

# Martin Johnson Heade

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In mid-nineteenth-century America, Martin Johnson Heade was one of the most significant landscape painters to depict nuances of atmospheric light in serene, pastoral compositions in a manner distinct from the dramatic realism of the Hudson River school. A native of Pennsylvania, Heade studied with Quaker painter Edward Hicks (1780–1849). After 1843 Heade's peripatetic life took him to cities along the eastern coast of the United States and to the distant Midwest. In 1859 he settled in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York City, where he began an enduring friendship with the famous landscape painter Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900).

A prodigious artist, Heade painted between fifteen and twenty-five works annually during his long career and actively exhibited them at American institutions across the country. By 1860, he had dedicated himself to painting landscapes and flowers, for which he was highly esteemed. Heade's trips to South and Central America in the mid-1860s ignited his interest in creating intimate landscape paintings with exotic flora and fauna. In the United States, Heade created many paintings of tidal marshlands along the northeastern coast. Flat and open, fetid and swampy, marshlands defied the conventions of picturesque landscape art. By the mid-1860s, however, Heade was among many American landscape artists who had come to appreciate the flat, quiet places where land, water, and sky meet. Heade used such atmospheric settings as meditations on time's passage, the fleeting beauty of nature, and the redemptive value of rural life.

# George Inness

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The wildly successful American landscape painter George Inness pioneered an expressive approach to art based on his conviction that the artist should interpret, rather than merely depict, nature. In the mid-1840s, he studied with French painter Régis-François Gignoux (1816–82), a Hudson River school landscape painter. Although Inness's early paintings exhibited the movement's interest in the rendering of meticulous detail, they were distinguished by his penchant for what he called the "civilised" landscape, rather than the rugged wilderness popular with his contemporaries.

While in Europe in 1853–54, Inness encountered the landscapes of the French Barbizon school, whose rural subjects and loose, expressive brushwork encouraged the artist in his subjective approach to landscape art. In poor health, he left New York City in 1860 for his native New Jersey. There, inspired by the beliefs of eighteenth-century Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), who posited a correspondence between the spiritual and material worlds, Inness began to emphasise mystical expression in his paintings. His art was little understood until 1884 when a retrospective exhibition established the high reputation he enjoyed for the remainder of his career. After 1870, Inness eschewed naturalistic form and detail for the dramatic expression of meaning through colour, light, and manipulated paint. Notorious among his contemporaries for tampering – sometimes disastrously – with his own paintings, he believed that the artist's achievements lay as much in the creative process as in the finished product. This conviction, along with his pursuit of an art of spiritual mediation, mark Inness as a forerunner of twentieth-century American modernism.



# John Frederick Kensett

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Kensett was one of the most influential American landscape painters who produced relatively small-scale, luminous coastal scenes during the mid-nineteenth century. Born in Connecticut in the northeastern United States, Kensett took up painting as an escape from the drudgery of his job as an engraver. In 1840 he sailed for Europe to pursue a career as a landscape painter.

Throughout much of the 1840s, Kensett travelled in England, France, and Italy. Supporting himself as an engraver, he studied landscape paintings by European masters and painted numerous compositions of his own. Sales of his landscape paintings in New York established his reputation in America, and within two years of his return, Kensett was an elected member of the National Academy of Design. He quickly became a powerful and much-loved figure in the New York art scene.

A prolific artist, Kensett painted widely throughout the northeastern United States, the American West, and Europe. He is best known, however, for quiet scenes of the New England coastline, New York's Hudson River, and his native Connecticut. A founding trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Kensett was deeply respected and esteemed by collectors, patrons, and his fellow artists. The year after Kensett's death, an auction sale of his studio's contents yielded more than \$136,000, an enormous sum for the time, which testified to the great respect his art commanded among his contemporaries.

# John La Farge

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One of America's early artist-intellectuals, John La Farge was an influential mural and easel painter who also invented opalescent glass, which he used to create spectacular window designs. In 1877 his decorative scheme for the interior of Boston's Trinity Church, a colourful mix of figurative and abstract decoration, was at the forefront of a style and period in American art and design now known as the American Renaissance (1876–1917). During this era, art of the past, particularly that of the Italian Renaissance, became a source for the development of an intensely nationalistic American art. La Farge's work also epitomised the spirit of the aesthetic movement, which emphasised the integration of the fine and decorative arts, architecture, and design.

Reared in a cultured French-speaking family, La Farge abandoned the practice of law at age twenty-four to study painting with the Boston painter William Morris Hunt (1824–1879) at his studio in Newport, Rhode Island. La Farge never studied in Europe, nor was he considered a modernist. However, he often was ahead of his European and American counterparts: he collected Japanese prints before James McNeill Whistler (1834–1904), created impressionistic landscapes before the first Impressionist exhibition took place in France in 1874, and painted in Tahiti a year before the French Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) ventured there. La Farge's cultural background, artistic attitudes, and refined sensibility were in many respects contrary to the dominant tendencies of American life, yet his contributions to American art and culture are irrefutable.

# Fitz Henry Lane

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Long deemed America's finest marine painter, Lane is credited with pioneering an emerging mid-nineteenth-century style of painting that favoured flat, serene coastal scenes bathed in crystalline light. As a child in the seaside town of Gloucester, Massachusetts, Lane was partially paralysed by polio, which barred him from continuing his family's maritime business. In 1840 Lane began painting coastal views around nearby Cape Ann and Boston Harbour. His early works reflect his study of English and Dutch marine paintings.

Lane's reputation as a marine painter was established by 1848, the year he returned permanently to his native Gloucester. Precluded by his infirmity from travelling inland to popular mountainous destinations throughout the American Northeast and West, he sailed along the eastern coast to Maine, New York City, and perhaps Puerto Rico on sketching trips. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Lane never ventured to Europe. Harbour and beach scenes, portraits of vessels, and views of America's northeastern shoreline constitute almost the entirety of Lane's production.

In his attention to flat, seaside landscapes, his smooth brushwork, and his use of light as an expressive element, Lane was at the forefront of an emerging style of mid-nineteenth century American landscape painting that departed from the naturalistic tendencies and dramatic mountainous landscapes of the Hudson River school. However, due to his relative isolation in Gloucester, Lane never achieved a national reputation, although his work was praised by several discriminating critics. His death at the age of sixty was termed by one critic as a "national loss."

# Worthington Whittredge

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Whittredge was a versatile and successful painter who depicted subjects from his experiences in Italy and the American West over the course of a long career. Born in the Midwestern state of Ohio, Whittredge turned to landscape painting in 1843. Within five years, the critical success of landscapes he exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York City and the support of wealthy patrons enabled him to travel to Europe.

During his decade abroad, Whittredge studied with history painter Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868) in Düsseldorf, Germany, and lived in Italy. Upon his return, he established a studio in New York's Tenth Street Studio Building, the home of many important American landscape painters. During the American Civil War (1861–65), Whittredge painted domestic interior views and woodland scenes that are among his best-known works. A prominent figure in the New York art scene, Whittredge served as an elected member and president of the National Academy of Design.

In the 1860s and 1870s, Whittredge made three trips to the American West, where the plains and mountains impressed him deeply. Expansive and preoccupied with light, Whittredge's mature landscapes were executed in the naturalistic style of the Hudson River school. After 1876, however, under the influence of the French Barbizon school painters and his American contemporary George Inness (1825–1894), Whittredge's paintings began to evince a greater emphasis on texture and emotion. He later experimented with an impressionist style characterised by broken brushwork and pure colour until he ceased painting in 1903.

# View of a Manor House on the Harlem River, New York

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Groombridge's *View of a Manor House on the Harlem River* is a view of the New York City neighbourhood then-known as Harlem Heights. The late-afternoon scene presents a cluster of houses and barns, with a church steeple in the distant background, on the far bank of the Harlem River. The steep hill in the foreground, populated by several cows and a shepherd, gives way to a series of undulating hills on which sheep graze. Above the low horizon, the sky is tinted pink by the unseen setting sun. Groombridge's tranquil view emphasizes the bucolic nature of the area, which remained farmland until well into the nineteenth century.

This is most likely one of the first paintings Groombridge made after he arrived from his native England and it is his only known view of New York. Harlem Heights was known as the site of an American victory over the British during the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). Groombridge's painting may have been commissioned by a local estate owner. The house at far left, long thought to be the 1765 Morris-Jumel Mansion, where the painting was discovered in the early twentieth century, has not been identified, but several similar homes graced the largely agricultural neighbourhood at the close of the eighteenth century. The setting's rural character – neither congested city nor desolate wilderness – was suited to the conventions of picturesque landscape painting brought to the new nation by Groombridge and his contemporaries, who were among the first to paint American scenery.

# In the Adirondacks

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*In the Adirondacks* is an idealised glimpse of the quintessentially American wilderness of the northeastern United States, most likely the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. Thickly wooded hills frame the view and direct the viewer's gaze back toward a horizon bounded by mountains.

To emphasize the illusive recession into space, Doughty juxtaposes angular bare branches on the left with feathery clouds in the distance. The wild and untamed branches counterbalance the graceful arc of the fisherman's taut rod, a benign instrument of man's ascendancy over nature. The calm scene presents American wilderness, even in its most uncultivated state, as a welcoming refuge for human recreation.

Doughty was instrumental in shaping the public perception of New England and New York, in the northeastern United States, as the nation's "classic" ground, at once natural and accessible, wild and hospitable. Although his contemporaries praised the topographical accuracy of his views, Doughty used sketches made on-site as the basis for largely imaginary compositions characterized by a rather dreamy, elegiac tone. He worked to adapt the conventions of European landscape painting to the unprecedented depiction of the American wilderness. *In the Adirondacks* is a typical product of Doughty's synthesis: such details as the bare tree branches and colourful foliage on the distant island mark the setting as unmistakably American, while the placid mood and careful framing fit the time-honoured formula of landscape art.

# Landscape with figures: A Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”

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Thomas Cole’s *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”* presents a mountainous forest landscape from an elevated perspective. Rocky outcroppings, blasted trees, a waterfall, a distant forest fire, and a tumultuous cloudscape all contribute to the sublime wildness of the scene. The drama of nature complements the dramatic gestures of the diminutive figures in the foreground. Although painted on a relatively small panel, the scene is larger-than-life in its romantic turmoil and emotional intensity.

This is one of twelve mahogany panels commissioned to decorate the main cabin of James Alexander Stevens’s Hudson River steamboat *Albany*. Cole was inspired by James Fenimore Cooper’s newly published novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). Set during the Seven Years’ War (1754/56–1763), Cooper’s work of historical fiction recounts the journey of sisters Alice and Cora Munro to join their father, a British commander, at a fort in northern New York. Guided through the wilderness by the Mohican Uncas, the frontiersman Hawkeye, and Major Duncan Heyward, their progress is thwarted by Magua, a Huron leader allied with the French. Cole’s painting depicts the story’s climactic scene. On the far left, Heyward motions toward the centre of the image. Hawkeye aims his rifle at Magua, who hangs from a cliff. The white-clad Cora, having been kidnapped and brutalized by Magua, lies dying at Hawkeye’s feet next to Uncas, who dies trying to save her. When the fine arts in America were still regarded as a superfluous luxury, Cole strategically associated his landscape with Cooper’s much-loved novel, which legitimized American nature as a vehicle for national cultural expression. In his paintings, Cole likewise demonstrated that the American wilderness could be the subject of art. *Landscape with Figures* shares Cooper’s epic vision of the American experience in which the virtues of the «noble savage» and the uncouth pioneer are



associated with the untouched landscape. In Cole's interpretation, the grandeur of the wilderness overwhelms the narrative, reminding the viewer that there are greater forces in the universe than human conflict and desire.



# Gloucester Harbor

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One of many views Fitz Henry Lane painted of his seaside Massachusetts hometown, *Gloucester Harbor* demonstrates the artist's quiet and luminous style. Lane painted this view on the shore of nearby Cape Ann looking across the placid harbour toward Gloucester from the residence of Samuel E. Sawyer, one of his most important patrons. The still water reflects the twilight sky, while the pebbly shore in the foreground is cast in shadow. Two men conversing on the beach and a fisherman in a small boat in the middle distance animate the otherwise tranquil scene.

*Gloucester Harbor*, with its calm water, low horizon, and glowing sky, is typical of Lane's shore imagery. In such works, painted beginning in the mid-1850s, the accurate representation of vessels is subordinated to compositional unity, achieved by the contrast of light-filled skies and dark foregrounds. In *Gloucester Harbor*, the transient effect of twilight and its expressive potential are as much Lane's subject as the harbour itself.

Lane created numerous paintings of Gloucester harbour from a variety of viewpoints showing the trade and fishing industries which has sustained the town since the early seventeenth century. In fact, Gloucester was changing rapidly in the years Lane painted it. The extension of the railroad to the town in 1847 opened the local fisheries to larger markets and brought tourists, many of whom would become Lane's patrons. His paintings make no reference to such developments, however, but present Gloucester as the quiet fishing village of his youth.

# Almy Pond, Newport

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While Kensett painted numerous views of the coast in the seaside town of Newport, Rhode Island, a popular northeastern tourist haunt, *Almy Pond, Newport* presents the region as a peaceful agricultural setting. The scene looks south along the peninsula shore, over Almy Pond toward Spouting Rock; the neighbouring town of Narragansett is barely visible across the distant bay. A clear, brilliant sky complements the flat, expansive landscape. Animating this otherwise still scene, a farmer, three children, and a straggling black dog walk toward grazing cows in the distance. The pervasive morning light unites the components of this view of country life.

*Almy Pond, Newport* suggests a return to rural values and a reaffirmation of the American transcendentalist belief in the sacredness of nature during the years prior to the American Civil War (1861–65). The work represents Kensett's ability to embed such broad themes in a specific, local landscape. Newport was one of Kensett's favourite subjects after he first visited in 1854. The region's flat terrain of marshes, beaches, and rocky outcroppings encouraged the artist to abandon his earlier compositional mode, which used a high vantage point to stress deep spatial recession, in favour of a lateral, open format that suggests infinite expansion beyond the edges of the canvas. This, along with his use of subtle brushwork to delineate topographical details and an omnipresent glowing light, exemplify Kensett's role in the development of a new style of landscape painting that eschewed the spectacular scenes of older Hudson River school artists.

# Rocks at Nahant

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*Rocks at Nahant* is one of a group of paintings of the rocky shore at Nahant, Massachusetts made by the artist during the mid-1860s. While many of his contemporaries depicted the region's marshes, rivers, and beaches, Haseltine focused obsessively on shoreline rocks. Impelled by a passion for scientific accuracy as well as artistic beauty, he rendered them with meticulous detail under varying atmospheric conditions.

In *Rocks at Nahant*, the horizontal composition of sea and sky is disrupted by a diagonal slope of smooth and fragmentary slabs of reddish igneous stone. The stones evince volcanic and glacial activity in the remote past and testify to the power of the waves' relentless pounding. In the middle ground, a placid tide pool mirrors the calm sky. Two diminutive figures and a distant sailboat on the horizon lend a sense of scale to the unearthly landscape of bare rock and sea. *Rocks at Nahant* is an essay on geologic history, anchored comfortably in contemporary, human time.

Haseltine's painting demonstrates Americans' fascination with the geologic history of the earth in the mid-nineteenth century, when scientific studies increasingly undermined biblical theories of creation. He was particularly influenced by the popular theories of the Swiss-born Harvard scientist Louis Agassiz (1807–1873), who saw in Nahant's rocks evidence of a universal ice age. Such works as *Rocks at Nahant* served both as souvenirs of this favourite seaside resort for wealthy Bostonians and as testimonials to the landscape's appeal as an object of scientific scrutiny.

## Brace's Rock, Brace's Cove

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Lane's haunting *Brace's Rock, Brace's Cove* is one of the artist's last works. Despite its mysterious, dreamlike quality, the painting portrays an actual locale: a notoriously dangerous group of rocks near the artist's native Gloucester, Massachusetts. The view looks across a cove toward the distant rocks, tinted pink by the setting sun. In contrast to the bright sky and placid water, the rocks and shoreline in the foreground are darkly shadowed. The twilight scene's stillness is broken only by the gently lapping waves and the disquieting presence of a skeletal boat, a foreboding symbol of death.

Lane painted four similar views of Brace's Cove. This version, perhaps the latest of the group, uniquely includes decaying autumnal foliage in the foreground and the starkest contrasts of light and dark. When Lane painted the series, his health was in decline, and a fire had recently devastated Gloucester. The painting reflects the bleak outlook of both the artist and the nation, which was in the midst of the American Civil War (1861–65). At that time the shipwrecked vessel was a common metaphor for the perilous condition of the nation.

Lane spent his career painting the shore around Gloucester. During the 1850s, he became preoccupied with the expressive potential of light and compositions that transcend topographical specificity. These qualities reach their full intensity in *Brace's Rock, Brace's Cove*, in which Lane uses a familiar landscape as a vehicle for restrained emotion.

# Indian Encampment

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Worthington Whittredge's *Indian Encampment* pictures a scene on the Platte River of Colorado. Although Whittredge was aware of violent conflict between American Indians and encroaching white settlers in the region, his painting presents the former as peaceful dwellers in nature, at a safe remove from the presumably white viewer. Whittredge's composition depicts a shallow, meandering stream that leads the eye toward foothills and distant snow-capped mountains. Bathed in a light, the landscape is filled with green foliage that suggests the bounty of spring or summer. The painting seems a factual record of exotic life on the American frontier, but it also subtly invites its viewers to access, even exploit the land in which native inhabitants coexist harmoniously with nature.

In 1866, 1870, and 1871, Whittredge travelled to the American West. However, unlike some of his contemporaries who pictured the sublime drama of the Rocky Mountains in monumental works, Whittredge painted the plains on an intimate scale, with the mountains as a distant backdrop. The horizontal composition and pervasive light that unites the calm scene are characteristic of the style of mid-nineteenth-century landscape painting that presented tranquil scenes of nature as a refuge from the horrors of the American Civil War (1861–65). Whittredge's shift toward such concerns is evident in his paintings of the early 1870s; *Indian Encampment* was likely painted after his second or third Western trip, probably in the artist's New York studio from sketches made on-site.

# Hunter Mountain, Twilight

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*Hunter Mountain, Twilight* is one of several paintings Sanford Gifford made of mountains at the close of day. Hunter Mountain, one of New York's Catskill Mountains, appears shrouded in a pale blue haze, silhouetted against a glowing sky accentuated by a crescent moon and a single star. In the valley below, grazing cows, a cowherd, and a house lend the scene an air of calm domesticity, yet the tree stumps that litter the foreground signal the degradation of nature that results from settlement. The contrast between such signs of destruction and the scene's luminous tranquillity induces a mood of melancholic reflection.

A common motif in the work of Gifford's contemporaries, the tree stumps that scar the land show the destruction of the nation's sacred wilderness and symbolize the devastation of the recent American Civil War (1861–65), in which Gifford had served in the Union army. Gifford's painting is informed not only by such national issues but by his intimate connection to the region it presents. Set near the artist's native Hudson, New York, the painting is not an image of newly settled wilderness, but of reclaimed land development: the dairy farm is situated on ground that was previously stripped of its hemlock trees to harvest tannin, an essential ingredient in the leather tanning process. During the artist's youth a large tannery was located at the base of Hunter Mountain. The despoiled landscape of *Hunter Mountain, Twilight* signals what was in the mid-nineteenth century an emerging concern for the preservation of nature.

# Paradise Valley

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John La Farge's *Paradise Valley* pictures a coastal landscape on a summer day. A sloping pasture littered with old stone walls and rocks stretches toward the distant Atlantic Ocean, whose surface glints under the bright but overcast sky. A solitary lamb reclines on the green turf, and small groups of sheep and cows are scattered beyond. With its generous scale and high horizon, La Farge's painting envelopes the viewer in its pastoral vision of peace and tranquillity.

*Paradise Valley* depicts a view from the Paradise Hills, just outside Newport, Rhode Island, where La Farge vacationed in the years following the American Civil War (1861–65). Begun not long after the devastating conflict, the work reflects the nation's hopes for reconciliation. An X-ray analysis of the painting revealed that it originally featured La Farge's pregnant wife kneeling in prayer with their son at her feet, reminiscent of a Madonna and Child. By substituting the lamb, an important Christian symbol, La Farge imbued his landscape with more subtle spiritual associations.

La Farge painted *Paradise Valley* entirely outdoors, defying the traditional practice of creating landscapes in the studio from sketches made on-site. The painting's exquisitely clear and luminous details reveal the influence of the English critic John Ruskin's (1819–1900) doctrine of painting with exact fidelity to nature. La Farge's attention to optical effects and bright colour also demonstrates his familiarity with then current theories of visual perception and related scientific texts. Today, *Paradise Valley* is widely regarded as both precocious and prototypical, one of the first impressionist paintings made by an American artist.

# Lake George from Bolton's Landing

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Alfred Thompson Bricher's *Lake George from Bolton's Landing* depicts the lake and the village of Bolton's Landing in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Between 1867, when he visited Lake George, and the early 1870s, Bricher painted several views of its scenery from sketches made on-site. The region was widely known from James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), a fictional tale set during the Seven Years' War (1754/56–63). With the opening of the railroad in 1849, Lake George became a popular tourist destination and artistic subject. *Lake George from Bolton's Landing* is one of many paintings that memorialise the pleasures of tourism. In contrast to his contemporaries' views of the lake from the water's edge, Bricher presented its watery expanse as a distant backdrop for a rustic, autumnal scene.

In Bricher's composition, the procession of trees and rustic fences across the foreground lead the eye toward the distant lake, which is bounded by hazy mountains. Although the scene appears static and peaceful, it also contains references to time's relentless passage. Late afternoon shadows creep across the foreground, and the colourful foliage signals the onset of autumn in the United States. The landscape's gradual shift from wilderness to cultivated land is suggested by the presence of mature trees alongside fences and tree stumps. Here Bricher presents Lake George as a place where city-dwellers, such as the well-dressed female tourists in the foreground, may appreciate the landscape's natural beauty without leaving the comforts of settled life.



# Newburyport Marshes, Approaching Storm

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Martin Johnson Heade made 120 paintings of coastal marshlands in the northeastern United States throughout his career. He produced his most dramatic compositions between 1865 and 1870, soon after he travelled to Central and South America. His intimate approach to the marshes around Newburyport, Massachusetts, combined the close observation of natural details with the suggestion of quiet stasis. This is evident in Heade's *Newburyport Marshes: Approaching Storm*, in which a serpentine stream bifurcates a flat marshland dotted with staddled haystacks. A solitary fisherman in the foreground and a group of farmers in the distance suggest the bounty of marshland life while lending a sense of scale to the scene. The haystacks, boulders, trees, and figures signal the horizontal composition's deep spatial recession. Sunlight illuminates the distant landscape, but the storm clouds across the top of the canvas cast the foreground in ominous shadow, lending the scene an air of uneasy expectation.

The delicate ecology that Heade pictured embodied the fragile balance between man and nature, civilization and wilderness. Saltmarsh haying was an urgent activity performed when tides were low and at the mercy of volatile weather, as suggested by the threatening clouds above. In Heade's day, young farmers were abandoning such traditional work to settle the American West. While the farmers shown in his painting represent a vanishing rural way of life, the artist, an avid conservationist, was also deeply aware of the environmental harm caused by the cattle for which salt hay was harvested.

# The Sidewheeler “The City of St Paul” on the Mississippi River, Dubuque, Iowa

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When Alfred Thompson Bricher travelled west to the upper Mississippi River Valley in 1866, he created many sketches that would become the basis for studio paintings, such as *The Sidewheeler “The City of St. Paul” on the Mississippi River, Dubuque, Iowa*. Painted six years after the trip, this work was purchased by Dubuque merchant J. H. Reed, whose dry-goods store appears prominently among the buildings at left. Bricher took equal care with the sidewheeler *The City of Saint Paul*, a steamboat built in 1855 and operated by the Northwestern Union Packet Company, a freight shipping firm. Sidewheelers were distinctive to the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Bricher’s portrait of this particular vessel lends authenticity to his image of a region remote from the northeastern United States, the traditional subject of American landscape painting.

This painting marks a departure from Bricher’s early works, in which water is generally seen from a distance. His portrayal of the Mississippi presents the expansive river under a glowing sky. Partly obscured by storm clouds in the upper right, sunlight illuminates the distant horizon. A pink glow pervades the scene, framed on the left by the landing and steamboat and on the right by sailboats and distant bluffs. A rowboat with two figures punctuates the broad expanse of placid water in the foreground. *The Sidewheeler “The City of St. Paul” on the Mississippi River, Dubuque, Iowa* demonstrates Bricher’s embrace of the then prevalent style of American landscape painting which favoured tranquil scenes dominated by light, water, and sky.

# Summer, Montclair

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Inness's *Summer, Montclair* is a verdant summertime idyll of a meadow populated by two boys; one fishes while the other reclines on the ground beside two wandering ducks. The vertical work is dominated by a mass of evergreens in the middle distance, echoed by the slender trunk of a tall tree in the left foreground. The painting exhibits Inness's characteristic loose, textured style in a narrow range of colours modulated by deep shadows and delicate highlights. The lush foliage that fills much of the work is complemented by the sky's fluffy clouds, which, along with the vitality of Inness's brushwork, convey the impression of a refreshing summer day.

*Summer, Montclair* is a title given to this painting after Inness's death in 1894. In fact, it appears to have been made not at Montclair, New Jersey, where Inness lived after 1884, but in Milton, New York, on the Hudson River. The landscapes Inness painted at Milton are characterized by his exceptionally free manipulation of paint; nevertheless, little in the work's subject indicates where it was painted. Inness was unconcerned with topographical specificity, believing that painting should evocatively interpret nature. In his search for an expressive landscape art, Inness was influenced by the French Barbizon school painters who created intimate representations of the landscapes outside Paris with rich colour and loose brushwork. *Summer, Montclair* – with its cool colours, dense shadows, and silvery highlights – recalls particularly the works of Barbizon painter Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875), which Inness admired for their “inspirational power.”

# Near Newport, Rhode Island

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*Near Newport, Rhode Island* is one of John Frederick Kensett's many paintings of the northeastern United States coastline rendered in a reductive composition of beach, rocks, ocean, and sky. Leaden clouds hang over the sea's crashing waves, which seem formidable in relation to the diminutive man and dog on the beach. Wearing an artist's broad-brimmed hat and smock and carrying a sketchbook, the man seems a stand-in for Kensett, whose initials appear just below him. A towering bluff bars the man's way and terminates the vista. The wreckage of a boat at the right sounds a warning to the ships on the distant horizon, while a dinghy on the beach at the far left is draped in brilliant red fabric, a sign of danger.

In each of his beach scenes, Kensett presented the shore under diverse atmospheric conditions, but typically in a mood of quiet serenity. In *Near Newport, Rhode Island*, however, the turbulent sea and sky invoke an uncharacteristically menacing mood. Painted in the year of the artist's untimely death, from pneumonia contracted after his failed attempt to rescue a drowning friend, *Near Newport, Rhode Island* seems a prophetic vision of the compelling yet perilous appeal of the sea.

After Kensett's first visit to Newport in 1854, he returned annually to paint its rocky shores. In the nineteenth century, Newport was one of America's most popular summertime destinations. Its thriving tourist industry offered Kensett a ready market for his paintings of familiar locations, which may explain why the artist repeatedly utilized certain compositional formulae.

# Yarra Flats

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The Yarra flats are located near the present day suburbs of Eaglemont, Heidelberg and Templestowe, approximately 50 km east of the Melbourne CBD. For the generation of artists that followed Buvelot these were all to become important painting locations. The flats are the point where the city's main river slowly meanders and loops back on itself, creating billabongs and wetlands. Most of the flats were cleared of native vegetation and were being used for farming by the 1850s, and a decade later the area had also become a locale where the wealthy built estates to escape the city. This area became a favoured painting location for Buvelot in the 1870s as it was both easily accessible and ideally suited to his interest in painting the quiet, unspectacular aspects of the Australian bush.

*Yarra Flats* exhibits a typical picturesque composition, applied to an Australian scene. The focus is on the foreground elements of water, vegetation, and the figures that are completely at ease in the landscape, relaxing while the cattle graze unattended nearby. This intimate view of tranquil, productive countryside reveals the influence of the Barbizon school of painters on Buvelot.

# On the road to Dromana

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Although *Yarra Flats* and *On the road to Dromana* were painted six-years apart, and in different locations, together they sum-up Buvelot's approach to depicting the Australian landscape. In both, there is an indication of vista and depth, but the works are not about the grand sweep of the landscape; rather the focus is squarely on the foreground and the figures that are completely at ease in the landscape, either picnicking in it or walking through it. The sun shines with a benign light; this is not the shimmering midday heat of summer favoured by the later Heidelberg school painters.

Dromana is located on the Mornington Peninsula, south of Melbourne. By 1872 it had a pier which enabled access to the region via steamers from Melbourne, leading to its establishment as a seaside resort. However Buvelot's choice of an elevated viewpoint does not feature Port Phillip Bay, the site of beachside recreation. He focuses on the native vegetation, particularly the gum tree, and the two large specimens on the right-hand side of *On the road to Dromana*, fill the height of the picture's plane, dwarfing the small figures on the path below. In spite of their scale, this is a non-threatening, productive landscape. The viewer is presented with a harmonious scene of rural labour, with the cut logs in the right-hand foreground referring to the timber-cutting industry in the area.

# The Punt, Echuca

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Carse's painting of the floating pontoon bridge on the Murray River at Echuca, Victoria, is an example of the fluidity of imagery in nineteenth-century Australia, with the same compositions often appearing in photographic and painted form, as well as in the illustrated press. The inland port at Echuca was critical for the transport of wool from the Riverina district of New South Wales to Melbourne, and in 1857 the entrepreneur Henry Hopwood launched his floating pontoon bridge, which enabled much faster crossing of stock and cargo.

In the 1860s the photographer Thomas Chuck photographed aspects of rural Victoria, including Echuca. Chuck's photo shows the punt, loaded with horse-drawn drays piled high with wool bales, and similarly laden drays on the far shore awaiting loading. This is the composition that Carse has replicated in his 1869 painting, with a few adjustments, such as the shifting of the foreground figures on the landing stage so that they engage in conversation; the addition of a figure in the punt in the lower left-hand corner; and, perhaps most-interestingly, the addition of an Aboriginal group on the foreground river's edge.

The image next appeared as a black and white illustration, adapted by English engraver JC Armytage, in Edwin Carton Booth's *Australia Illustrated*, published in London between 1873 and 1876.

# Wannon Falls

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The Wannon Falls are located 19km west of Hamilton in Victoria's Western District. They were a very popular subject for nineteenth-century artists, and were also of great interest to geologists, their importance being noted in a range of contemporary publications. Chevalier made a number of painting expeditions in Victoria, the first being in 1858. When he visited the falls in 1862 as part of a Western District tour, it was in the company of the Bavarian scientist Georg von Neumayer, who was in Australia making magnetic, nautical and meteorological observations. Although this painting offers an accurate rendition of the setting of the falls, the inclusion of figures and cattle offered the nineteenth-century viewer a scene of an unthreatening, 'civilised' landscape, rather than focusing on the raw power of nature which the falls could be seen to embody. Here the wilderness has been conquered and made both safe and productive. The artist offers the viewer a combined image of a landform that refers to the antiquity of the volcanic past of the continent co-opted into the imagery of pastoral improvement.

In 1865 a view of the falls was included in Chevalier's published *Album of Chromo Lithographs*. Both print and painting utilise the same composition – but with one particularly telling change. The lithograph follows the model of the traveller image, with the figures in the foreground showing the artist's European travelling companions. For the painting those figures have been replaced by three Aboriginal figures engaged in ordinary daily activity, seemingly oblivious to the importance of this place of wonder, beauty and scientific note.



# Bivouac on a river

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*Bivouac on a river* belongs to an interesting class of work, in that it is a painting by Thomas Clark, but based on a sketch by someone else, namely the Victorian surveyor Robert Hoddle. Hoddle made a number of field trips in Victoria in the late 1830s and 40s, making many pencil and watercolour sketches, some of which in the 1860s were turned into finished works by other artists such as Henry Short and Thomas Clark.

This scene shows a solitary figure by a tent in the left foreground, seemingly making a sketch of the scene we see. In the middle ground is a group of figures by a fire. The composition, showing travellers in the landscape, belongs to an earlier genre of works. However the depiction of the vegetation hints at an awareness of von Humboldt's theory of plant geography as the view moves from the framing eucalypts in the foreground up the course of the creek, which in its dark moistness supports the luxurious growth of tree ferns, to the sunlight rocky outcrop in the background whose harsh conditions supports only sparse vegetation.

Based on Hoddle's initial sketch, *Bivouac on a river* adopts different conventions from those in most of Clark's landscapes. The receding creek and obscured horizon line make it a more 'difficult', less welcoming landscape, although the figures shown are comfortable in it. In spite of its small scale, these various elements combine to make this an unusual painting – as much a genre and a history painting as it is a landscape.

# Balmoral Beach

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Beach scenes, particularly as a locus of middle class leisure were a popular contemporary subject, especially amongst painters familiar with French Impressionism. Conder's interest in Japanese art is evidenced by the composition of this painting, with its high horizon line and structuring diagonals, which hold in balance the darkly wooded headland and the large, almost empty expanse of sand in the foreground, as well as containing the gentle sweep of the bay. There is also an overall softness of atmosphere and palette in the work (different to the bright sunlight of many of his contemporaries), which gives the painting a delicacy and sense of the transient. The fleeting is also captured by the 'snapshot' effect of the painting. This is a quickly captured rendering of an everyday moment (witness the figure holding up her skirt to wade in the shallows) rather than a large-scale, studio-based heroic image of nation-building that was the subject of many of Conder's contemporaries.

# Moyes Bay, Beaumaris

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Painted less than a decade after Louis Buvelot's *Road to Dromana*, McCubbin's *Moyes Bay, Beaumaris* shows a shift in artists' approach to the depiction of the shoreline areas of Port Phillip Bay. No longer predominantly a place of rural labour, this area (approximately 20km from the Melbourne CBD) had become the site of middle-class seaside leisure. Over the summer of 1886-87 McCubbin, Tom Roberts and Louis Abrahams rented a cottage together at Mentone in order to paint *en plein air*.

*Moyes Bay, Beaumaris* is in many ways a painting of two halves. The left-hand side, where all human activity takes place, shows a recreational boating party on a rocky foreshore, reflecting McCubbin's interest in painting contemporary life. The right-hand side, in its closely-observed study of rocks, sand and reeds, indicates an awareness of the English critic John Ruskin's writings that urged artists to depict nature in painstaking detail. The figure of the boy bridges the gap between the two; his close attention to the rock pool and his toy boat (an accurate model of a couta boat – a locally-developed boat specific for fishing in the conditions of Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait) echoes the artist's own close observation of nature.

# Down on his luck

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*Down on his luck* was painted in the year following the celebrations of the centenary of the arrival of the First Fleet, and the founding of British settlement on the continent of Australia. It is part of a group of paintings that McCubbin and others such as Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton self-consciously made as 'national' pictures at this time, tapping into the popular adulation of the pioneers, who were seen as bringers of civilisation and progress to the 'untrodden wilderness'. Showing the figure of a failed gold prospector, and in spite of its melancholy air, the painting evoked nostalgia for a passing way of life, and promoted an ideal of the freedom of the itinerant bush worker.

*Down on his luck* is indebted to European realism, in particular the influence of images of large-scale figures of French rural workers posed within the landscape which McCubbin was familiar with through reproductions. In his paintings on the theme of the pioneer McCubbin was deliberately trying to establish a form of modern history painting in Australia, combining uniquely Australian subject matter with the equally unique Australian light and landscape. To this end, the landscape was painted *en plein air* at Box Hill (a suburb to the east of Melbourne's CBD), while the figure, modelled by fellow artist Louis Abrahams, was added later in the studio.

## Sirius Cove

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The young Australian artists of the 1880s and 1890s saw themselves as bohemian figures, meeting regularly to discuss art, read poetry, and drink wine. This camaraderie extended to the artist camps they set up for *plein air* painting on the outskirts of Melbourne at places like Mentone, Heidelberg and Eaglemont. The idea of the artist camp – a place where natural beauty could be appreciated, in opposition to the materialism of city life – appealed to artists such as Streeton and Roberts, who subscribed to the idea of the moral superiority of art and nature. Streeton's pleasure in painting at these artists' camps was to be replicated when he moved to Sydney in the 1890s. One of the artist camps in Sydney, Curlew Camp, was located on the north shore of the harbour, at Little Sirius Cove near Mosman. Streeton's view in *Sirius Cove* of the sparkling sunlight on water, trees and rocks, each of which is treated of equal importance in the composition, celebrates the beauty of the place as well as the harbour as a site of freedom and relaxation. His loosely impressionistic painting style, the use of the square brush, the lack of an obvious subject, the use of heightened colour, and his practice of painting on elongated panels to create unexpected compositions, echoed the perception of Sydney as a relaxed city in contrast to Melbourne.

# Sunset on the Yarra

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The Yarra, Melbourne’s main river and the location of its port, was a popular subject with artists in the 1880s. The city had boomed on the back of the gold rushes, with the population almost doubling to 473,000 in the decade 1881-1891. Visitors were impressed by this southern hemisphere city, which was larger than many European cities of the time – a view summed up in the English journalist George Sala’s phrase “Marvellous Melbourne”. Trade – particularly the export of wool, wheat, lamb and beef – was also critical for Melbourne’s flourishing economy, and the Port of Melbourne was seen as the city’s vital point of contact with the rest of the world. As a subject for painting, the port offered artists great aesthetic potential while still connecting with a bigger narrative about national identity.

*Sunset on the Yarra*, painted soon after Paterson’s return from nine years studying and painting in Scotland, clearly shows his interest in a decorative form of tonalism. The subject is ostensibly a scene from everyday life in the metropolis, but Paterson’s painting is in reality a hymn to the transient beauty of light. He evokes a poetic mood through the depiction of the play of light on water; of light as mediated in the sunset sky through the haze of cloud and smoke; and the absence of light in the silhouetted shapes of ships and dock buildings, with human figures only just visible going about their daily tasks. This sunset view suggests an awareness of the American artist James McNeill Whistler’s nocturnal paintings of the Thames, and stands in contrast to the sparkling views of Sydney Harbour painted in the same decade by Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton.

# Mt William from Mt Dryden, Victoria

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Mt William is highest peak of the Grampians, a sandstone range in the Western District of Victoria. It was given its European name in 1836, being named after the reigning English king. Von Guérard visited the area in both 1855 and 1856, spending much time travelling through the area in search of vistas suitable for painting. This is one of several large works based on sketches made during his travels and painted in his Melbourne studio. In keeping with his training in the German Romantic tradition, von Guérard sought to capture the dramatic in the landscape, thereby evoking a sense of awe.

*Mt William from Mt Dryden, Victoria* was well-received when first exhibited, and von Guérard was praised for his empathy with the Australian landscape. This detailed image of the world is rooted in observation, and the artist has used colour to heighten the experience of viewing the natural world at the moment of sunrise. Painted on a white ground for luminosity, the light from the rising sun illuminates the peaks in yellow and throws the mountains in the foreground into the complementary colour of dark violet. Similarly the plain has the complementary colours red and green, and together these colour harmonies suggest a world in equilibrium where nature is untarnished by humans.

# Fern Tree Gully, Cape Otway Ranges

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This painting is based on sketches made by von Guérard in October 1859 at Wild Dog Creek in the Cape Otway region on the southern part of Victoria's western coast. Von Guérard had visited the region again in 1862 with the artist Nicholas Chevalier and the scientist Georg von Neumayer. The making of detailed sketches was an important part of von Guérard's practice, one which he had adopted during his training in Düsseldorf in the 1830s and 1840s. He remained committed to the making of landscape paintings based on drawings which were marked by their fidelity to observed nature.

The details of the large 1859 sketch were followed closely in this painting, with the exception of the substitution of the figure of the Aboriginal woman and child for the sketch's image of one of the artist's travelling companions. The inclusion of the Aboriginal figures, at ease in the landscape, was intended to lend a timeless quality to the painting. The landscape itself, and its division into zones, reflects the theory of plant geography expounded by Alexander von Humboldt, and the argument that the artist could convey important information about flora if it was depicted in its natural setting, making clear the interconnectedness of each element in an environment. Thus the moist foreground abounds with tree ferns, the drier hillside supports eucalypts, and the exposed, sunlit peak is free of vegetation.