

AUSPICIOUS VISION

EDWARD WALES ROOT AND
AMERICAN MODERNISM

A Guide to the Exhibition

Auspicious Vision: Edward Wales Root and American Modernism is divided into seven galleries.

A fully inclusive gallery guide is available at the Museum of Art.

Edward W. Root and The Eight Gallery 1 South



Maurice B. Prendergast (1858-1924),
Landscape with Figures, ca. 1910-12,
oil on canvas, 29 1/4 x 42 1/4 in. 57.212

Around 1907 when Root lived in New York City he worked for the New York *Evening Sun* where he witnessed heated arguments about modern art between the other newspapermen in his office. This was a life-altering experience for Root, then in his early 20s. He began associating with a group of progressive American painters known as The Eight whose pictures focused on the vitality of modern urban life.



Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928),
Inland Tempest (Inland Storm),
not dated, oil on linen, 18 X 40 in. 57.123

Artists represented in this gallery include George B. Luks (1866-1933), Maurice B. Prendergast (1858-1924), Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928), and Everett Shinn (1876-1953).

More than a Man of Business: Edward W. Root and Art Dealer Frank K. M. Rehn (1886-1956) Gallery 1 West



Edward Hopper (1882-1967),
The Camel's Hump, 1931, oil on canvas,
32 1/4 x 50 1/4 in. 57.160

After receiving a bequest from the estate of his mother, who died in 1928, Root was able to collect art on an ambitious scale and build a private art gallery adjacent to his Clinton, N.Y. home to display and store his growing collection. Frank K. M. Rehn (1886-1956) was one of the leading contemporary American art dealers in New York City during the 1930s. His gallery played a key role promoting the work of several artists who shaped the history of early 20th-century American art. During this period Root acquired many important pictures from the Rehn Gallery.



Reginald Marsh (1898-1954),
Texas Guinan and Her Gang,
1931, tempera on canvas, 36 5/8 x 48 in. 57.196

Artists represented in this gallery include Edward Hopper (1882-1967), Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), Henry Lee McFee (1886-1953), Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889-1953), Peppino Mangravite (1896-1978), Alexander Brook (1898-1980), and Julian Levi (1900-82).

Artists represented in this gallery include Edward Hopper (1882-1967), Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), Henry Lee McFee (1886-1953), Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889-1953), Peppino Mangravite (1896-1978), Alexander Brook (1898-1980), and Julian Levi (1900-82).

**Edward W. Root and Charles E. Burchfield
(1893-1967)
Gallery I West**

New York City art dealer Frank K. M. Rehn (1886-1956) played a key role promoting the work of Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967). In 1928, the same year Root helped to convince The Metropolitan Museum of Art to purchase a watercolor by Burchfield, he acquired for himself the *Country Blacksmith Shop (Blacksmith Shop)*, 1928. This

was Root's first purchase for what would ultimately be a large collection of Burchfield watercolors he acquired, 21 of which he gave the Museum, the largest group of works by any artist in the Root bequest.



Charles Burchfield (1893-1967),
Decorative Landscape, Hot Morning Sunlight, 1916,
transparent watercolor on white wove paper with color notations in graphite,
13 7/8 x 19 1/8 in. 57.94

**Representation Was Not Inevitable or Desirable:
Edward W. Root and the American Avant-Garde
Gallery I North**



Arthur Dove, (1880-1946), *Tree Composition*, 1937,
oil on canvas,
15 1/4 x 21 in. 57.136

The artworks in this gallery, acquired by Root between 1915 and 1950, trace his interest in art that was influenced by the European avant-garde's pictorial experiments with fragmented form, expressive color, and semi-abstract, or non-representational imagery.



Preston Dickinson (1891-1930), *Fort George Hill*,
1915, oil on canvas,
14 x 17 in. 57.132

Artists represented in this gallery include Preston Dickinson (1891-1930), Charles Demuth (1883-1935), Elsie Driggs (1898-1992), Charles Sheeler (1883-1965), John Marin (1870-1953), Ilya Bolotowsky (1907-81) and Arthur G. Dove (1880-1946).

**The Record of a Gesture:
Edward W. Root and Drawings at Mid-Century
Gallery 2 East**

For every large, glamorous painting Edward Root acquired, he also collected numerous works on paper. Drawings were important to Root because, as art critic Aline Saarinen observed, he “collected things in order to observe them intimately, study them, analyze them, understand them.” The scale and touch of most drawings are ideal for Root’s brand of personal aesthetic reflection. The drawings on view in Gallery 2 East signal the broad range of subjects and materials to which Root was attracted.

Artists represented in this gallery include Stephen Green (1917-99), William Palmer (1906-87), Federico Castellón (1914-71), Saul Steinberg (1914-99) and William Steig (1907-2003).



William C. Palmer (1906-87),
Clematis Henryi, 1950,
casein and ink on paper,
14 3/16 x 11 1/2 in.
57.202

**New Methods of Expression:
Edward W. Root and the New York School
Gallery 2 South and Gallery 2 West**



Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), *Nude*, 1952,
brush-applied black ink over graphite on
wove paper mounted on illustration board,
21 1/2 x 29 1/8 in. 57.201

During the mid-1940s Root became acquainted with several New York City-based artists who painted in a non-representational style that has come to be known as the New York School or Abstract Expressionism. While in the 1930s Root had acquired representational art, his collecting habits broadened to embrace this new, abstract painting. Root recognized that the artists had “a special feeling for their medium and [were] making a serious effort to develop new methods of expression. Therefore I gave their pictures, and the pictures of other modern American artists, sympathetic attention.”

Artists represented in this gallery include: William Baziotos (1912-63), Willem de Kooning (1904-97), Robert Motherwell (1915-91), Jackson Pollock (1912-56) and Mark Rothko (1903-70).

Artists of the Pacific Northwest Gallery 2 West

When artists Mark Tobey (1890-1976), Morris Graves (1910-2001) and Kenneth Callahan (1907-86) – all from the Pacific Northwest – began exhibiting their work at galleries and museums in New York City, Edward Root was an early and enthusiastic patron. The artists were inspired by Eastern art and spirituality but they applied these influences to their art-making practices in distinctive ways. Callahan painted and drew landscapes with a light touch, while Graves meditatively made simple brushstrokes for a single flower or bird. Tobey developed a calligraphic painting style that he called “white writing” and created vibrant, abstract cityscapes in which pulsating figures, traffic, and electric signs merge with buildings.

Mark Tobey (1890-1976), *Partitions of the City*,
1945, opaque watercolor on Masonite,
30 1/4 x 23 3/4 in. 57.264



Theodoros Stamos (1922-97) Gallery 2 North

Edward Root and artist Theodoros Stamos developed a friendship based on their mutual interests in art and nature. Stamos began exhibiting his art in New York City in the mid-1940s, and Root was an early patron, collecting 18 Stamos works between 1945 and 1953. It was Stamos's ability to evoke sublime forces in nature that initially attracted Root to his work. Stamos later recollected, “Edward visited with me in my studio quite often, where I left him to go through the paintings which were stacked along the walls. He would sit by himself, going through them and . . . arriving at three or four which he would buy at once, outright.”

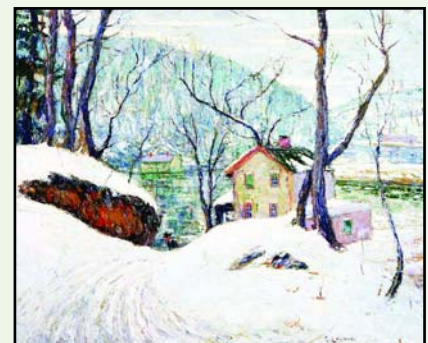


Theodoros Stamos (1922-97), *Road to Sparta*,
1949, oil and sand on Masonite, 58 x 18 in.
57.253

Branches of Root's Bequest: Edward W. Root's Other Gifts Otto Meyer Galleries

In addition to the Root bequest, the Institute has been the grateful recipient of numerous other gifts from him. These donations range in artist's nationality, time period, and subject theme. Many were donated in the early 1950s: modern American paintings, 15th-century to 20th-century European prints, 20th-century American prints, and 18th- and 19th-century Japanese color woodblock prints.

Artists represented in this gallery include: Rembrandt (1606-69), Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Stuart Davis (1894-1964), Adolf Dehn (1895-1968), and Ernest Lawson (1873-1939).



Ernest Lawson (1873-1939),
Winter, Spuyten Duyvil, 1908,
oil on canvas, 25 1/8 x 30 in. 58.41