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Childe Hassam exhibit a summertime treat at Peabody Essex Museum



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One of Childe Hassam's favorite destinations was Appledore Island, part of the Isles of Shoals. On and off for 30 years, Hassam visited the island and painted — mainly gardens and seascapes. The accumulated works — only about 40 all together — make up just a fraction of Hassam's lifetime catalog, but collected at the Peabody Essex Museum they make for an intriguing, intelligently curated exhibition.

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Childe Hassam painting on the porch of Celia Thaxter's cottage, c. 1886, attributed to Karl Thaxter. Courtesy photo / Portsmouth Athenaeum

By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Jul. 21, 2016 at 1:07 AM

SALEM
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Childe Hassam painting on the porch of Celia Thaxter's cottage, c. 1886, attributed to Karl Thaxter. Courtesy photo / Portsmouth Athenaeum

... go...
American Impressionist: Childe Hassam
Isles of Shoals
... Peabody Essex Museum, East India
Salem
... through Nov. 6
... S: Free with museum admission. Visit
... m.org or call 978-745-9500.

He called himself "the Marco Polo of painters." He might also have called himself "the Claude Monet of Americans."

Childe Hassam (1869–1935), the Dorchester-born oil painter and watercolorist, traveled almost everywhere in Europe and America — and painted everywhere he went. At many of his favorite haunts — Boston, Paris, New York — he delved into multiple plein-air scenes, leaving behind a voluminous body of impressionistic



works that were successful financially during his lifetime, and have constantly found critical approval.

One of his favorite destinations was Appledore Island, part of the Isles of Shoals. On and off for 30 years, Hassam visited the island and painted — mainly gardens and seascapes. The accumulated works — only about 40 all together — make up just a fraction of Hassam’s lifetime catalog, but collected at the Peabody Essex Museum they make for an intriguing, intelligently curated exhibition.

“American Impressionist: Childe Hassam and the Isles of Shoals” remains on view through Nov. 6. Gathered together from private collections and various museums, the show focuses on one strong period from a prolific painter with varied influences.

“American Impressionist” contains none of the dreamy, evocative cityscapes that Hassam’s reputation rests upon. This is summertime, along the sea, the breezy weather instilling a breezy attitude. In the company of friends, most notably the patron and poet Celia Thaxter, Hassam captured the visual essence of Appledore.

Curated in conjunction with the North Carolina Museum of Art, along with an unusual artistic partner, the Shoals Marine Laboratory, “American Impressionist” not only hangs the Hassams on the wall, it shows current photographs of his actual vistas, and gives visitors porch-style white rockers to sit in and enjoy it all.

Hassam was already an established artist when he began visiting Appledore. So “American Impressionist” does not chronicle any artistic coming-of-age, or examine the artist’s changing technique or perspectives over the course of three decades.

This is the work of a painter on holiday, assured of his craft and investigating the changing light and textures on a speck of granite out in the Atlantic. The exhibition trumpets no bold artistic challenges or insights, but neither did Hassam’s work. In that way the casual summer-time atmosphere aptly places these oils and watercolors in a friendly, insouciant environment.

The rockers, the faux post-card station — “We’ll send it for you!” — and the piped-in ocean sounds may be hokey, but we’re not looking at paintings of grim angst here. And as far as looking goes, the well-spaced exhibition offers plenty of the long sight lines necessary to appreciate an impressionistic perspective. This is bright summer en plein air, and Hassam — as does “American Impressionist” — both capture it intuitively.

“American Impressionist: Childe Hassam and the Isles of Shoals” runs through Nov. 6 at the Peabody Essex Museum. The exhibition is free with museum admission. Visit www.pem.org or call 978-745-9500.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow @PowersKeith; email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com

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FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU
Friday, July 22, 2016						
	"The Last Schwartz"		7:30 pm			
		Gloucester Stage Company				
	Kids' Night Hike		8:00 pm			
		Crane Estate				

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