THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION
BY ROBERT B. HARSHE
PAINTINGS, WATER COLORS
PASTELS, DRAWINGS AND ETCHINGS

APRIL 21, 1938 TO MAY 22, 1938
ROBERT B. HARSHE

THE WORLD knew Robert B. Harshe as a great museum director. They saw him at his desk working tremendously hard at the task of making the Art Institute into a gallery to rank with the leading galleries of the world. But all this time Mr. Harshe had a side of his life he kept secret. He was painting. Every week-end found him before his easel. He never took a business trip without slipping a drawing pad into his pocket. A summer in the Southwest or Europe meant a summer to paint.

Few people knew of his passion. When he came to the Institute he made up his mind not to show his work. 'It would only confuse things' he would insist when some friend, sensing its quality, urged him to exhibit. As a boy he determined to become an artist. After graduating from the University of Missouri he studied in Chicago at the School of the Institute. In New York at Columbia he worked with Arthur Dow, whose theories of design made a strong impression. In Paris he painted at the Colarossi Academy and in London at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. Frank Brangwyn and Philip de Laszló were then his masters.

Before he entered the museum field he made a reputation as an etcher. The Luxembourg Museum owns a set of his prints. But though he drew and etched with distinguished skill he preferred to paint. First in pastel, later in water color and oil, he perfected his style. Now and then a water color found its way into a museum or a private collection. But for the most part he continued to pile up canvases in the studio, determined not to let anything leave his hand until he was satisfied.

The present exhibition, showing work in many media, is but a fraction of what he produced. What do you see? Robert B. Harshe was no dilettante or amateur. You sense in each sketch or finished canvas a firm control over the pictorial elements. The work has vitality. The best of it is painted with amazing strength and dash when you consider how it was squeezed in between details of an unusually busy life. It progressed. From the earlier landscapes with their absorption in Impressionist principles of color, atmosphere, and light he went forward to the late figure compositions, strongly built in color.

All his life Mr. Harshe experimented with various techniques. He disliked the heavy, murky quality found in certain combinations of oil paint. In tempera and its allied media, he discovered a method of working which allowed full play of crisp brush-stroke and striking passages of luminous color. Surrounded by painting all day, in his studio he remained himself. Preferences he had. These were for Degas, Bonnard and Vuillard—artists who wove the shifting motes of Impressionism into rhythmic patterns. But in his own work he did not imitate. In every example you feel a sensitive color vision. You sense a charm of approach and handling wholly personal.

Daniel Catton Rich
CATALOGUE

PAINTINGS

1. IN THE STUDIO
2. READING
3. REFLECTIONS IN A MIRROR
4. NEW YORK VILLAGE
5. THE ORANGE DRESS
6. SUMMER IDYLL
7. RUINS OF THE OLD CHURCH, TAOS
8. GIRL IN RED
9. PUEBLO, TAOS
10. ENGLISH HARBOR
11. GIRL WITH CIGARETTE
12. LANDSCAPE, ENGLAND
13. GLOUCESTER
14. PEONIES
15. MARTIN'S LANE, NANTUCKET
16. GIRL AT CAFÉ TABLE
17. FISHING SHACKS
18. STILL LIFE
19. STEP LANE, NANTUCKET
20. STEEL BRIDGE
21. STREET IN GEORGETOWN
22. STILL LIFE, FLOWERS AND FRUIT
23. THE FLORENTINE MIRROR
24. EDGE OF THE VILLAGE
25. OLD CLOWN
26. CLIFFS AT TORQUAY
27. NUDE WITH HAT
   Lent by Mr. Charles H. Worcester
28. ROCKS, MAINE
29. AT THE WINDOW
30. STREET IN SNOW
31. THE STRIPED SKIRT
32. NANTUCKET INTERIOR
33. LADY IN PINK

WATER COLORS AND GOUACHES

34. AT THE DRESSING TABLE
35. SNOW IN FLUSHING
   Lent by Mr. Charles H. Worcester
36. ON THE SEINE
37. MORNING IN THE CATSKILLS
38. THE HOTEL GARDEN
39. BY THE MEDITERRANEAN
40. FISHING VILLAGES
41. BY THE SEA
42. CHICAGO STREET IN SNOW
43. MICHIGAN AVENUE
44. AMSTERDAM CANAL
45. BENDING NUDE
46. ACROSS THE SEINE
47. MORNING GOSSIP
48. GLOUCESTER HARBOR
49. TREES AND HOUSES
50. CANAL IN HOLLAND
51. CHICAGO PARK
52. BALLET GIRL AT WINDOW
53. CLIFFS AND SEA
54. BARGES ON THE SEINE
55. IN THE MIRROR
56. BALLET GIRL

DRAWINGS

57. PARIS, THE SEINE (Pen and Ink)
58. THE CROQUET GAME (Sepia Ink)
59. HOLLAND CANAL (Pen and Ink)
60. THE OLD FASHIONED HAT (Ink and Wash)
61. PENSIVE MODEL (Pencil and Wash)
62. BALLET GIRL STANDING (Pencil and Wash)
63. CONVALESCENT (Charcoal)
64. GIRL IN CHAIR (Pencil)
65. SEATED FIGURE (Pencil and Wash)
66. MODEL WITH ARMS RAISED (Charcoal)
67. BALLET GIRL SEATED (Pencil and Wash)
68. BALLET GIRL WITH HANDS CROSSED (Charcoal and Pencil)
69. GIRL IN SLACKS (Sanguine)
70. GIRL STANDING (Pen and Wash)
71. SEATED GIRL (Charcoal and Wash)
72. NUDE RESTING (Charcoal)
73. NUDE SEATED (Brown Crayon)
74. NUDE IN ARMCHAIR (Charcoal and Chalk)

PASTELS

75. DUTCH GATEWAY
76. RUE DAUPHINE, PARIS
77. EVENING, HOLLAND
78. THE FERRYMAN
79. THE NARROW STREET
80. WAREHOUSE
81. WOMAN IN BLACK
82. THE DOORWAY ON THE CANAL

ETCHINGS

83. INTERIOR OF A WORKSHOP
84. DORDRECHT
85. AT THE SIGN OF THE TWO LIONS
86. STREET IN FRANCE
87. DUTCH COTTAGES
88. LAGUNITA, STANFORD UNIVERSITY
89. THE OSTRICH