

Image 16

**William Glackens**

(American, 1870–1938)

At Mouquin's, 1905

Oil on canvas

122.4 x 92.1 cm (48 1/8 x 36 1/4 in.)

Friends of American Art Collection

1925.295

William Glackens was one of **The Eight**, a group of artists interested in extending the boundaries of art through their choice of subject matter: scenes of modern urban life.¹ More broadly known as the Ashcan School, this group included artist Robert Henri, who influenced Edward Hopper (see page 64). During the first decade of the 20th century, The Eight challenged the more conservative subject matter and restrained style favored by the **National Academy of Design** in New York City. Unlike the scenes of immigrants and slum life preferred by some members of The Eight, Glackens focused on the fashionable upper-middle class and the world of popular entertainment.

Mouquin's, a French restaurant located near Glackens's studio in New York, was a favored meeting place for the men and women of Glackens's circle. The painting depicts lawyer James B. Moore in the company of a brilliantly dressed woman who has been identified as Jeanne Louise Mouquin, the wife of the restaurant's owner. Glackens's wife Edith and the art critic (and early champion of Glackens's work) Charles Fitzgerald can be seen reflected in the large mirror behind them. The inclusion of a tabletop **still life** of flowers, glasses, and liquor bottles, along with the mirror and the sheen on the young woman's dress and the cloak—all painted with loose brushstrokes—indicate Glackens's

fascination with light on reflective surfaces, an element taken from French **Impressionism**.² Moreover, Glackens's theme of modern life set in a fashionable environment where leisure activity takes place is aligned with Impressionist subject matter.

Glackens traveled to Paris with Robert Henri in the late 1890s, where he gained firsthand exposure to the works of artist Édouard Manet and other artists in the Impressionist circle. Detached or withdrawn figures seen in images of cafés by both Manet and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec are echoed in *At Mouquin's*. With her brilliantly rendered dress and cloak, Jeanne Mouquin is the focal point of the composition. Ignoring Moore's attempts to draw her attention by brandishing a glass of liquor, she wears a preoccupied and withdrawn expression, creating an element of tension in the painting that hints at the uncertainties of modern life.³

Art critics in New York and Chicago responded negatively to the painting. Some saw the painting as “vulgar” because of its candid depiction of drinking and the uncertain meaning of Jeanne Mouquin's puzzling stare. Although this type of scene was seen more

often in French painting at this time, American audiences were only on the brink of accepting such sophisticated scenes of modern life in art. Despite this early criticism, *At Mouquin's* remains one of Glackens's most renowned and accomplished paintings, for both its style and subject matter.⁴

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1 Barter, *American Arts*, 1998, p. 320

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*