

american paintings of the nineteenth century

franklin kelly

American paintings of the nineteenth century Franklin Kelly has been a prominent figure in the study and appreciation of this transformative period in art history. The nineteenth century marked a significant turning point in American art, characterized by the emergence of distinct styles and movements that reflected the nation's evolving identity. Franklin Kelly, an art historian and curator, has played an instrumental role in illuminating the contributions of various artists and movements during this era. This article explores the rich tapestry of American paintings from the nineteenth century, highlighting key artists, movements, and themes that define this remarkable period.

Historical Context of Nineteenth-Century American Art

The nineteenth century was a time of profound change in America, with rapid industrialization, westward expansion, and a burgeoning sense of national identity. This context significantly influenced the art produced during this period.

1. The American Landscape

One of the most notable themes in nineteenth-century American painting was the landscape. Artists began to explore the vastness and beauty of the American wilderness, reflecting the nation's romantic ideals and aspirations.

- Hudson River School: This group of artists, including Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, and Asher B. Durand, focused on the majestic landscapes of the Hudson River Valley and beyond. Their works celebrated the natural beauty of America and often contained moral and philosophical

undertones.

- Key Characteristics:
- Attention to detail and realism in nature.
- Use of light and color to depict the changing atmosphere.
- Themes of exploration and manifest destiny.

2. Genre Painting

Alongside landscapes, genre painting emerged as a popular style that depicted everyday life and ordinary people. This movement revealed the social dynamics of the time, often portraying scenes of leisure, work, and community.

- Notable Artists:
- Winslow Homer: Known for his depictions of rural life and the sea, Homer's work captures the American spirit.
- Eastman Johnson: Focused on intimate domestic scenes and the lives of African Americans, providing a glimpse into the social fabric of the time.
- Key Themes:
- Realism and authenticity in human experiences.
- The interplay between light and shadow to enhance emotional depth.
- Exploration of social issues and cultural identity.

3. Portraiture and Historical Painting

Portraiture gained prominence as Americans sought to establish their identities in a rapidly changing society. Artists began to create images that not only captured likenesses but also conveyed the subjects' character and status.

- Notable Artists:

- John Singleton Copley: Although primarily active in the eighteenth century, his influence persisted into the nineteenth century with his refined portraits of American elites.

- George Catlin: Known for his portraits of Native Americans, Catlin's work serves as a historical record of indigenous cultures.

- Key Characteristics:

- Emphasis on facial expressions and gestures to convey personality.

- Use of symbolism to represent status, power, or cultural heritage.

- Large-scale historical paintings that depicted significant events in American history.

Major Movements in Nineteenth-Century American Art

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of several art movements that shaped American painting. Each movement carried its unique philosophies and approaches to art.

1. Romanticism

Romanticism was a dominant cultural movement that emphasized emotion, nature, and individualism.

In American painting, this translated into a deep appreciation for the sublime landscapes and the exploration of human experiences.

- Key Artists:

- Thomas Cole: Often regarded as the founder of the Hudson River School, Cole's works reflect the grandeur of the American landscape and the importance of nature.

- Albert Bierstadt: His dramatic portrayals of the American West captured the imagination of the public and emphasized the nation's manifest destiny.

- Key Themes:

- The awe and terror of nature as a reflection of human emotion.
- The use of light to evoke feelings and create atmosphere.
- An exploration of the spiritual connection between humanity and the natural world.

2. Realism

As the century progressed, artists began to respond to societal changes with a focus on realism. This movement aimed to depict life accurately and truthfully, often addressing social issues and the lives of the working class.

- Notable Artists:

- Gustave Courbet: While a French artist, his influence reached American painters who sought to portray reality without idealization.
- Mary Cassatt: An American painter associated with the Impressionists, Cassatt's work often focused on the lives of women and children.

- Key Characteristics:

- Depiction of everyday life and ordinary people.
- A focus on social issues, including poverty and labor.
- Use of natural light and true-to-life color palettes.

3. Impressionism

The Impressionist movement began in Europe but found a unique expression in America. American artists traveling to France were influenced by this new approach, incorporating its principles into their work.

- Key Artists:

- Childe Hassam: Known for his vibrant depictions of urban life and American landscapes, Hassam

captured the essence of the Impressionist style.

- Mary Cassatt: Her works often depicted intimate moments between mothers and children, utilizing the loose brushwork characteristic of Impressionism.

- Key Themes:

- Exploration of light and its effects on color and form.

- Use of quick brushstrokes to capture fleeting moments.

- A focus on contemporary life, including urban scenes and leisure activities.

Franklin Kelly's Contribution to Nineteenth-Century American Art

Franklin Kelly has made significant contributions to the understanding and appreciation of nineteenth-century American art. His scholarship has helped to elevate the profiles of many artists and movements that may have been overlooked in traditional narratives.

1. Curatorial Work

As a curator, Kelly has organized numerous exhibitions that spotlight the diversity and richness of American painting from this period. His exhibitions often explore themes of identity, landscape, and social change, providing viewers with a comprehensive understanding of the art and its context.

- Notable Exhibitions:

- Exhibitions focusing on the Hudson River School, highlighting the importance of landscape in American art.

- Shows dedicated to genre painting, examining how artists portrayed everyday life and social issues.

2. Publications and Research

Kelly has authored and contributed to various publications that delve into the intricacies of nineteenth-century American art. His research often emphasizes the connections between art, culture, and society, offering insights into the motivations and inspirations behind the works.

- Notable Publications:

- Books and catalogues that examine the impact of individual artists and movements on the broader landscape of American art.
- Articles that critique and analyze specific artworks, shedding light on their historical significance.

Conclusion

The American paintings of the nineteenth century Franklin Kelly explores are a testament to a dynamic period in art history. From the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Hudson River School to the intimate portrayals of everyday life, this era produced a diverse array of artistic expressions that mirrored the complexities of American society. Through the lens of Franklin Kelly's contributions as a curator and scholar, we gain a deeper understanding of the artistry, themes, and movements that defined this remarkable century. As we continue to explore and appreciate these works, we are reminded of the power of art to reflect and shape our understanding of identity, culture, and the human experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Franklin Kelly and what is his significance in the study of American paintings of the nineteenth century?

Franklin Kelly is a prominent art historian and curator known for his expertise in American art, particularly the paintings of the nineteenth century. He has contributed significantly to the

understanding and appreciation of this period through his research and exhibitions.

What are some major themes in nineteenth-century American paintings that Franklin Kelly has explored?

Franklin Kelly has explored themes such as the American landscape, the depiction of everyday life, the influence of Romanticism, and the evolving identity of America during the 1800s. He highlights how these themes reflect societal changes and cultural values of the time.

Can you name a notable exhibition curated by Franklin Kelly focused on nineteenth-century American art?

One notable exhibition curated by Franklin Kelly is 'The American Landscape: 1825-1865', which showcased key works from this period and examined how artists captured the changing American environment and identity.

How did Franklin Kelly contribute to the understanding of Hudson River School painters?

Franklin Kelly has extensively studied the Hudson River School, emphasizing its role in shaping American landscape painting. He has provided insights into the techniques, philosophies, and historical contexts of artists like Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church.

What impact did Franklin Kelly's work have on the appreciation of American art in museums?

Franklin Kelly's work has significantly increased the appreciation of American art in museums by promoting exhibitions that highlight overlooked artists and styles, fostering a deeper understanding of the cultural narratives embedded in nineteenth-century American paintings.

What resources or publications by Franklin Kelly are essential for studying nineteenth-century American paintings?

Key resources by Franklin Kelly include his essays in art journals, exhibition catalogs, and books such as 'The American Landscape: 1825-1865' and 'American Art: A Cultural History', which provide valuable insights and analyses of the period's artwork.

[American Paintings Of The Nineteenth Century Franklin Kelly](#)

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