

THE BATTALION

First Impressions

Art display provides peaceful getaway, alternative form of education

By MELISSA SOROLA-BILANO
The Battalion

For some Aggies, the definition of art is the graffiti on the walls of Freebirds. Aggies can now be exposed to a collection of work inspired in part by the most well-known of the Impressionists, Claude Monet, in a new exhibit at the J. Wayne Stark Gallery.

"Sunlight and Shadow, American Impressionism 1885-1945" is the gallery's latest exhibit. The artists were New England painters who attended the Hudson River School in Albany, N.Y. and then studied in Europe. There they learned the techniques of the Impressionist painters.

Impressionism originated in France in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The most famous Impressionists were Monet, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas and Paul Cezanne. Catherine Hastedt, curator of the Stark Gallery, said she tries to show exhibits she feels will be useful to A&M students and faculty.

"One of the missions of the Stark Galleries is that we bring in a variety of exhibitions that I can tie into the curriculum in some manner," Hastedt said.

She said past exhibits have included elements of architecture, science, fine arts and history.

"There are so many ways art can be useful than just looking pretty," Hastedt said.

She said a poetry class and an art history class have already visited the exhibit.

"I want to encourage both the faculty and students to make use of the gallery," Hastedt said.

Hastedt said the goal of an Impressionist was to capture the quality of light and to not create an exact replica of what they were seeing.

"It's interesting to stand up close to [the paintings] and see the brush work and to

see how much color is in them that doesn't exist in real life," she said.

Hastedt said some Impressionists would use purple to paint trees, so the painting doesn't look right when seen up close.

"But when you stand back a few feet from the painting, it all blends together to give you an impression of the colors and the quality of the light," Hastedt said.

Thomas Meteyard's "North River Scituate, Massachusetts" stands out from the 78-piece collection, which includes works using oils, pastels and watercolors, because Meteyard used a wood-block technique, different than the other Impressionists.

Hastedt said Meteyard's wood-block print is inspired by the Orient.

Also included in the landscape scenes is Louis Kronberg's "Portrait." "Portrait" is a painting of a woman in front of a simple background.

"This is very plain, and you are focusing on the light on her face and how [the artist] can capture the softness of the skin and is less concerned with capturing the quality of the fabric [of her dress]," Hastedt said.

Joseph M. Hutchinson, an art and architectural history professor at A&M, said the American Impressionists came after the impressionist movement in France.

"What makes them American, besides their nationality, is that they began to paint American subject matter with the Impressionist palette," Hutchinson said.

This trait is seen in the landscapes, many of which are of the New England countryside.

Hutchinson said he does not find it hard to get students interested in art. Art history classes fill up quickly.

"This [art] represents a visual world which [students] can learn from," Hutchinson said.

"These artists were the first to really begin to look at [the environment] in a different way. Rather than seeing it as something to be conquered, they saw it as something to be admired, and as a result, painted it as a sense of joy of life that begins to come from the paintings."

Hutchinson has assigned his current art history class to see the exhibit and report on one of the paintings based on what they see and how it relates to his lectures and their textbook.

The English department has also used the exhibit as an educational tool.

Professor Janet McCann, who teaches Poetry Writing Through the Visual Arts, had her class see the exhibit and then write a poem about one of the paintings.

McCann said her students try to use the Impressionists' techniques to write their poems by emphasizing the use of light.

"Some write nature poems in a way that an Impressionist would approach it," McCann said.

McCann said most of her students' poems are a mixture of interpretation and description.

Art has an impact on some student's lives, and they take it upon themselves to visit the galleries.

Delaine Taylor, a sophomore sociology major, went to the exhibit because she is a fan of art.

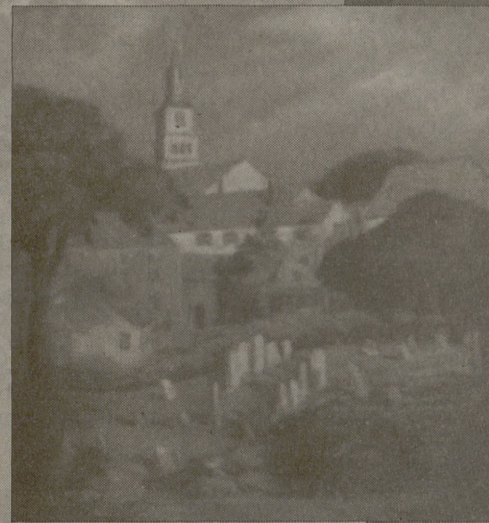
"It's nice to come in here because it's quiet and peaceful," Taylor said.

Taylor said the quiet space gives her the chance to interpret the art. She said she encourages other Aggies to visit the galleries.

"Sunlight and Shadow American Impressionism 1885-1945" will be on display through March 11. The exhibit is on loan from the Fuller Museum of Art in Brockton, Mass.

Jim and Alice Lyons, who live outside of Boston, contributed the works from their private collection.

The Stark Gallery is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. There is no admission fee. Guided tours are available for groups of five or more.



Watermark: John Joseph Enneking's "Spring, Along the Neponset."

Top: Herbert Cash, "Autumn Still Life;" Middle: Elizabeth Miller Lobingier "Rockport Graveyard;" Bottom: Marion Campbell Hawthorne, "Street in Provincetown"



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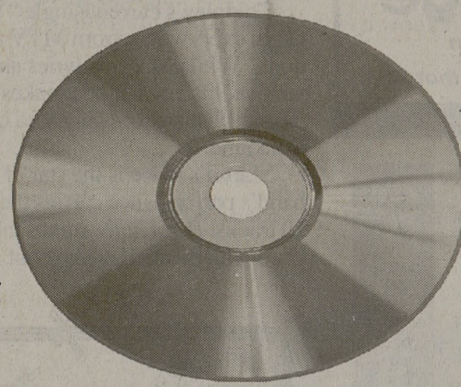
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