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Stuart Davis, Newburyport, c. 1930

In Memory of
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Newburyport, MA

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Commemorative Exhibition

Paintings by

MARTIN J. HEADE (1819-1904)

FITZ HUGH LANE (1804-1865)

from

THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF MAXIM KAROLIK

and

THE M. AND M. KAROLIK COLLECTION

OF AMERICAN PAINTINGS FROM THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

MAY 3 THROUGH MAY 28, 1954

M. KNOEDLER AND COMPANY, 14 EAST 57 STREET, NEW YORK

The present exhibition — commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Martin J. Heade's death and the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Fitz Hugh Lane's birth — grew out of conversations between Mr. Maxim Karolik and two members of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Lloyd Goodrich, Associate Director, and John I. H. Baur, Curator, together with the staff of M. Knoedler and Company. As a veteran and discriminating collector of American art, Mr. Karolik has long had a special interest in the work of these much-neglected painters. To make the exhibition possible, he has lent us several of his own pictures and has helped obtain from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts a special exception to its five-year restriction on the loan of works from the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815-1865, which he and the late Mrs. Karolik recently gave to that institution. The present occasion is, therefore, the first time any part of this pioneering collection has been shown outside the Boston Museum since its opening there in 1951. We are deeply grateful to the Museum of Fine Arts for this privilege.

Mr. Goodrich and Mr. Baur, both leading scholars in the field of American art, selected the exhibition and undertook much of its planning and organization. Mr. Baur provided the illuminating introduction on the place of Heade and Lane in our nineteenth-century painting. With Mr. Karolik's permission, we have also printed the following letter because it expresses, in so personal a manner, his feeling for these two artists. The biographical sketches are condensed from the Boston Museum's *Catalogue of the M. and M. Karolik Collection*.

William F. Davidson
M. Knoedler and Company

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

February 22, 1954

DEAR MR. GOODRICH AND MR. BAUR:

You already know how pleased I am about the Commemorative Exhibition of Martin J. Heade and Fitz Hugh Lane. We all agree that these two men highly deserve such an exhibition, and it gives me great satisfaction that you and Mr. Constable shared, from the very beginning, my "ferocious enthusiasm" for the work of these almost forgotten men. Today, a decade later, I can openly say how fortunate for all of us that Mr. Constable, who, as you know, actually collaborated with me, did not try to "cool off" that enthusiasm.

When one thinks of Heade's dramatic emergence in New York in 1943 at the Museum of Modern Art, where Dorothy C. Miller and James T. Soby had arranged the exhibition, "Romantic Painting in America," one continues to wonder how precarious the artist's lot always was and still is. When the artist is alive he needs a Patron; when he is dead he needs a Discoverer. But if he was creative, his work never dies; it continues to live. Sooner or later the Discoverer arrives. In the long history of the art world such cases are frequent. But why do they happen? One answer to this question I found in Mr. Baur's Introduction to the catalogue of the collection of American Paintings which my wife and I gave to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He shows clearly how "the gradual descent into oblivion" started because the art historians refused or were unable "to form independent judgments on the basis of paintings rather than on earlier published sources." What a sad commentary on art historians! Decade after decade, generation after generation, they were able to write only variations on a borrowed theme. Of course Mr. Baur, as a scholar, brings out other reasons for their unenlightened behavior, such as changes in taste and new trends in ideas, but I do not believe the historians can escape the blame if they are unable to withstand influences of this kind.

An enlightened art historian knows that techniques, sooner or later, become old-fashioned. Subjects, designs and compositions, sooner or later, are labeled conventional. But he ought

to know that it is only these accessories, indispensable though they are to the artist, that are vulnerable to the changes of fashions and tastes. Wherein do the intrinsic and lasting values of a work of art lie? What is there about it that fascinates us? It is the wondrous magic that creates a mood, and the feeling that radiates from it. This magic makes a work of art of any school and of any century live forever.

Heade and Lane, we know, were contemporaries of the Hudson River School artists, but they stand apart in their painting. If we take into consideration the time and circumstances in which they worked, it is truly amazing how constantly these two men were preoccupied with *light*. With them color was a means toward light. All this was done with the *old-fashioned* accessories.

Can one say that these two men, in their approach to painting, were the equivalent of the French Impressionists on this side of the ocean? In my opinion, the answer is *yes*.

You no doubt remember what happened in the above-mentioned exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art when one painting by Heade was shown. Mr. Constable and I attended that exhibition. Many visitors, including the dealers, were asking each other, "Who is Martin J. Heade?" When we left, Mr. Constable and I talked a great deal about the quality of the picture. My remark at that time was: "If a man could paint a work of such quality, we must find out who that man is." Well, we did, and the result, as you know, is twenty-six paintings by him in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Quite a number are in private collections and prominent museums, and in 1948 Robert G. McIntyre wrote a book about him. As to Fitz Hugh Lane, the first time I heard about him was from Mr. Baur. At that time Lane was known principally as a painter of ships though his name had begun to emerge a decade before Heade's.

When I write of these two men, I want you to know that I speak as an interpreter, not as a proud collector. We are all interpreters, not creators, and can only express opinions. Many authorities on both art and music forget that without the work of the creative artist they would have nothing to say. After all, it is the artist's creation that stirs their imagination and gives them their material. In my opinion, the interpreter often "gets away with murder,"

because Imagination is the principal tool with which he works. For the creative artist Imagination is not enough. He knows that a work of art requires form and design. To accomplish that he must use Reason.

In the catalogue of the "Romantic Painting in America" exhibition, Mr. Soby justly wrote: "Romantic painting represents the temporary triumph of Imagination over Reason in the war between the two." But in such a war the artist must resolve the conflict before he starts the actual execution of his conception.

Being a free lance and not belonging to any institution, I can come out into the open and challenge those fashionable connoisseurs who are insistently interested in painters who represent a "School." Heade and Lane, in my opinion, do not belong to any School. I doubt whether they ever had the desire to belong to a School or ever dreamed of constituting a School. If the work of these men must be defined, then I would use Mr. Soby's appropriate words, "romantic as a state of individual mind rather than as a cohesive tendency in art."

Some utterances in this letter, I admit, sound a bit bombastic, and they certainly show that there is no "humility" in me. But someone must remind us of the simple, elemental truths. Who is to do it?

Please extend my greetings and warm thanks to Mr. Henschel and Mr. Davidson for their generosity in making Knoedler's handsome galleries available and for undertaking all the practical arrangements for the exhibition. The full measure of their help proves that they share our enthusiasm for the creative work of these two men.

As always,

Sincerely,

MAXIM KAROLIK

