Editor's Note

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Frontispiece: John La Farge

LAMPLIGHT STUDY (Mrs. John La Farge), 1865
Charcoal on rice paper, 7 15/16 x 5 11/16 inches
Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas
The William Bridges Thayer Memorial
Inness’ "impression of nature" is exemplary of the climate of "eclecticism" that existed in American art during the late 19th century. This period witnessed a synthesis of expression and an interchange of thought and style that combined the concerns of pure subject matter with the virtuosities of technique and theory — how one saw a painting became equally as important as what one saw.

The "plein-air" landscapes of Inness and others approached issues of contemporaneity, spatial composition, light and color that were concurrent with similar interests emerging abroad. Unlike the European atmosphere, however, the American sensibility was both receptive and responsive to artistic and cultural exploration. The starkness of Corot, the disturbing reality of Manet’s *Dejeuner sur l’Herbe* (1865-6), and the boldness of Monet’s color which shocked the sobriety of the Parisian Academy were more compatible to American tastes educated in the works of the Hudson River Valley and Luminist Schools.

Part II of James Yarnall’s article on John La Farge examines the dynamics of this interaction of form and content as reflected in La Farge’s landscape *Paradise Valley* and provides a closer examination of the artistic process, the working through of ideas and their subsequent translation onto the canvas.

*Paradise Valley* is a technical tour-de-force indicative of the brand of expression and theory that would catapult artistic development into the 20th century.

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“Eclecticism” plays a significant part in Sr. Arlene Woods’ historic and iconographic study of a medieval baldacchino-puteal ensemble. Her article is particularly interesting when considered within the cultural climate of the 19th century where the possession of a structure of such scale and history was thought quite stylish and very much in vogue with the popular interest in the antique.

Egyptology was a flourishing new field in the 19th century as was archeology due in part to Heinrich Schliemann’s excavation
of Troy and Mycenae. There evolved out of this environment a burgeoning fascination with the antique, the ancient world, and anything of an exotic or oriental nature.

According to E. B. Smith (Architectural Symbols of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages), the baldachin as an architectural form has important triumphal and symbolic connotations dating back to Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures as places of divine or royal authority and sanctity. The four-columned, canopied structure can be traced through the time of Alexander the Great, the imagery of Roman emperors such as Septimius Severus and Caracalla, and most predominantly in Byzantine ivories, coins, and palace architecture. The baldachin as a summation of both function and symbol achieved, perhaps, its highest conclusion in the early 17th century and the Baldacchino of Bernini at St. Peter’s in Rome where he established the ideal resolution of pagan form and Christian philosophy.

— J.A.R.

ERRATA

WINTER 1982
p. 5 — La Farge’s trip to the South Seas was with Henry Adams
p. 7, fig. 1, cover — credit line should include: Gift of Frank Jewett Mather, Jr.

p. 8, fig. 2 — corrected title: Rocks at Newport
p. 21, footnote 8 — Deed is dated April 30, 1861
p. 22, footnote 10 — Land Evidence 38:99

SPRING 1982
Because the 23rd footnote was accidentally omitted the numeration of the footnote is one out of order.
Footnote 23 — Newport Mercury, 9 November 1872