

**HOW ENGLAND TRANSFORMED WINSLOW HOMER,
FROM HIS BRUSHSTROKES TO HIS VIEW OF NATURE**

**New Exhibition *Coming Away: Winslow Homer and England*,
Opening at Worcester Art Museum,
Presents Rare Opportunity to See Works by Homer alongside Those of
English Influences, Such as J.M.W. Turner and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema**

Worcester, MA—August 30, 2017—From March 1881 through November 1882, iconic American artist Winslow Homer lived in the small fishing village of Cullercoats on the northeastern coast of England—a period that was pivotal in the development of his work. This November, this crucial period in Homer’s life will be explored in a new exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum. *Coming Away: Winslow Homer and England* will show how the landscape of England, the artists he met there, and the reviews his work received while abroad all had a profound impact on his career. Featuring 50 works by Homer, as well as paintings by his English contemporaries, the exhibition is organized in collaboration with the Milwaukee Art Museum, and will be on view at Worcester from November 11, 2017 through February 4, 2018, and at Milwaukee from March 2 through May 10, 2018.

Coming Away demonstrates how new influences impacted Homer’s artistic development during and after his stay in England, and how this time exacerbated the tensions he felt between the traditional nature of his subject matter and the modernity of his aesthetic vision. By the 1870s, Homer (1836-1910) had already established himself as a successful artist in the United States, receiving widespread acclaim for his paintings, watercolors, and prints. In March 1881, the artist travelled to England, most likely spurred by the growing interest in British art in the United States as well as the success of his work there (his 1876 painting *The Cotton Pickers* – on view in the exhibition – was a highlight of the 1878 summer exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts). While in England, Homer engaged with the work of the country’s masters, including Joseph Mallord William Turner and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, as well as with paintings by regional artists from the coastal village of Cullercoats, where he established a studio. He also purchased two cameras at this time, suggesting his interest in contemporary forms of picture making.

Co-curated by Elizabeth Athens, Assistant Curator of American Art at the Worcester Art Museum, and Brandon Ruud, Abert Family Curator of American at the Milwaukee Art Museum, *Coming Away* centers on two of Homer’s major paintings from this period drawn from the organizing museums’ collections: the Milwaukee Art Museum’s *Hark! The Lark* (1882) and the Worcester Art Museum’s *The Gale* (1883-93). Homer chose *Hark! The Lark* to represent him and his entire experience in England at the Royal Academy of Arts 1882 summer exhibition, and considered it the most important and best picture he ever painted. *The Gale* was the first major painting Homer completed following his return to the United States, and one he worked on for a decade as he processed and reflected on his time in England. *Coming Away* will feature these two works alongside more than 60 additional paintings, watercolors, drawings, and photographs by Homer and his contemporaries, including Turner’s *Stormy Sea Breaking on a Shore* (1840/45) and Alma-Tadema’s *The Convalescent* (1869).

“We are honored to be partnering with the Milwaukee Art Museum on this path-breaking exhibition and to be able to display these two foundational works by one of America’s important artists side by side,” said Jon L. Seydl, senior director of collections and programs at the Worcester Museum of Art. “*The Gale* is a very special painting in Worcester’s collection – when the Museum acquired it in 1916, it set a record for the sale of an American painting and became a keystone in our world-renowned holdings of American art. We are thrilled to now be able to present these paintings alongside works from nearly fifty institutions and organizations to tell the story of Homer’s seminal eighteen months in England.”

While Homer’s earlier works often used nature as a backdrop for the presentation of his subjects, his paintings during his time in England emphasize instead the dynamic struggle between humanity and the natural world. Homer’s brushwork during this period also became more vigorous, in keeping with the power of the North Sea and the ruggedness of the people who lived and worked along its coast. While the core of the exhibition is dedicated to his artistic output in England, *Coming Away* will also include both earlier and later works which demonstrate the considerable and lasting influence of Homer’s sojourn in England on his career.

As early as 1873, Homer began studying color theory and watercolor practice. Throughout the 1870s and especially during his stay in Cullercoats, Homer favored English paints and papers and often experimented with English techniques, such as blotting away color to reveal white paper underneath. *Coming Away* is a rare opportunity to see many of the artist’s watercolors from this period exhibited together, presenting the progression of his watercolor technique over time. Notable watercolors in the exhibition include *Forebodings* (1880), *The Mussel Gatherers* (1881-82), and *English Coastal Scene* (1883).

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition is co-published by the Yale University Press, the Worcester Art Museum, and the Milwaukee Art Museum. It features new scholarship by co-curators Elizabeth Athens and Brandon Rudd, as well as by Martha Tedeschi, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director at the Harvard Art Museums, along with a complete illustrated checklist. The catalogue is made possible through support from the Wyeth Foundation for American Art and the Henry Luce Foundation.

The Worcester presentation of *Coming Away: Winslow Homer and England* is made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Lunder Foundation, and The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation. Additional funding is provided in part by The John and Ruth Adam, Jr., Exhibition Fund, The Heald Curatorial Fund, and The Michie Family Curatorial Fund.

Related Events

Third Thursday Master Series Art Talk:

On Thursday, November 16 at 6pm, Judith C. Walsh, Professor Emerita of Paper Conservation at Buffalo State College, will present an art talk about Winslow Homer’s painting, *The Gale*,

which was the first major painting Homer completed following his return to the United States in 1882. A reception in the Museum's Renaissance Court, with cash bar and live music, will follow the lecture.

Symposium:

On Friday, December 8 at 6pm, Dr. Sarah Burns, Ruth N. Halls Professor Emerita of Art History at Indiana University, Bloomington, will present the keynote lecture for a symposium examining Winslow Homer's time in England. A day of talks by noted scholars of American and British art will follow on Saturday, December 9, from 9:30am to 5:30pm. Held at the Worcester Art Museum, the keynote and symposium are free and open to the public. Registration is required and can be made by calling 508-793-4317. The symposium is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum's encyclopedic 37,500 piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to collect photography. As the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience.

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$16 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$14 for seniors 65+, and \$14 for college students with ID. (New hours and admission, effective September 1, 2017) Members and children under four are free. Parking is free. For more information, visit worcesterart.org.

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