

The Lyman Allyn Art Museum presents

At Home and Abroad

The Transcendental Landscapes of Christopher Pearse Cranch

At the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, New London, CT through February 25, 2008

At Home and Abroad; The Transcendental Landscapes of Christopher Pearse Cranch offers more than the beauty of masterful landscape painting. This impressive exhibition also provides historical and cultural context for the work of an artist whose creative life was informed and driven by philosophical ideas. Cranch's artistic and historical significance goes beyond landscape painting. It is the fascinating story surrounding his work that makes this exhibition especially compelling.

Christopher Cranch was a poet, musician and philosopher as well as an accomplished visual artist. He was perhaps better known for his success as a poet and strong philosophical ties to the New England Transcendentalists than for his fifty-year career as a landscape painter. However, it was ultimately painting, not poetry that proved the best vehicle for his exploration of Transcendental concepts, giving Cranch a place in history as the only Transcendentalist to make painting his profession. His work, thoroughly grounded in sound painterly practice, was also tightly linked to his philosophical beliefs. He was a renaissance man, who became a voice for the cultural trends of the 19th century through his diverse creative abilities in caricature, poetry, music and painting.

Inspired by the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Cranch, a graduate from Harvard Divinity School, transcribed nature onto canvas as an act of devotion. Like Thoreau, he attempted in his landscapes, to express the correspondence between the everyday life of nature and spirituality. He was intimate with some of the most innovative thinkers in America and counted among his friends Margaret Fuller, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George William Curtis, and James Russell Lowell.

This well-designed exhibition follows the evolution of Cranch's painting from his work in America with the Hudson River school through his experience abroad with the Barbizon school in Paris and his time in Italy. At home, he was an elected member of the prestigious National Academy of Design, contributing to major American exhibitions. Abroad, he was among an elite group of Americans to gain entrance to the highly competitive Paris Salon. He met with critical success as a painter, but his ongoing dialog with Emerson and the ideas of Transcendentalism remained of primary importance to him, inspiring and informing his work throughout his artistic career.

The exhibition is accompanied by curator Nancy Stula's beautiful, comprehensive catalog ***At Home and Abroad: The Transcendental Landscapes of Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813 – 1892)***. The catalog, along with the exhibition's extensive wall text, offers an education not only in the life of an individual artist, but in the important creative, philosophical and religious issues of the 19th century.

This exhibition is part of the ongoing celebration of the Museum's 75th anniversary. For information on events and programs connected with this celebration, visit www.lymanallyn.org.