

Charitably



Speaking

353 Southern Artery

Quincy, MA 02169

A PUBLICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS CHARITABLE MECHANIC ASSOCIATION

President's Message

Happy Holidays to you all. As we draw to the end of year, we can look back to a good year for MCMA. Our finances are strong, membership is growing, we had some great events, and we are ready for a new year.

We held our Fall Quarterly at a new location for us, the Woburn Country Club in Woburn, Mass. Those who attended the event liked the location and the food provided. Thanks to Tom Crowdis and his committee for arranging for this new venue. At this Quarterly Meeting, six Associate Members signed the membership book and became full members of our organization. Congratulations to Bryan Murphy, Richard Stewart, John Lordan, Paul Lordan, Gregory Davidian, and Steven Anderson, Jr.



We were treated to a talk by our own Paul Revere III, who spoke to us about what is like to be Paul Revere, and shared stories about and some artifacts from his historic family. As he closed his talk he asked me to stand in front of a handsome piece of furniture he brought. After he lifted the front, it turned out to be a lovely commode. A commode that belonged to Paul Revere the Patriot! Historic artifacts come in all shapes, sizes, and purposes.

On December 6th we held our Christmas Party at the Neighborhood Club in Quincy. We had a strong turnout and a festive night. I hope we can restore the annual Christmas Party to our schedule.

As we near the end of the calendar year, our grants to deserving organizations for 2019 are approaching \$250,000.00. Something we should

all be proud of. Thank you to Paul Lohnes and the planning committee for all their work in examining grant requests, visiting the applicants, and then deciding who should be funded. This is some of the most important work we do as an organization.

We are continuing our work to have our ownership of the once lost *Wounded Indian* sculpture recognized. Now on display at the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Va., we are working with a top art recovery lawyer to convince the museum that their sculpture was improperly removed from Mechanics Hall while it was being cleared for demolition.

As the end of the year approaches, I urge all of you to make a financial contribution to MCMA. We want to keep MCMA strong, and no other nonprofit I know of puts so much of its expenditures into doing good deeds. Whether your gift is small or large, please make a contribution to your organization before the end of year. Be just and fear not. Best wishes for the New Year. – **Peter**



Helping Others

Our ongoing efforts to promote the mechanical trades through MCMA’s grants program brings us in contact with a very wide range of organizations, from those preparing students for careers in highly skilled professions, to others working to

enable physically, mentally, or emotionally challenged individuals to develop basic skills that will enable them to obtain employment and live more independent lives. Even so, when we were first contacted by **Double Edge Theater Productions** a few years ago, we were initially skeptical that they would meet the criteria for an MCMA grant. Nonetheless, as they do with all the requests we receive, our Planning

Committee looked into the details, visited the facility to get an in-person understanding of the organization and explanation of the request, and ultimately approved it.

Double Edge, located in Ashfield, Massachusetts, stages original theater productions and collaborates with the community in the training and teaching of emerging artists and interns. Importantly (to us), their students learn all aspects of production and design, from lighting and set construction to props, puppets, and costumes. And through their apprenticeships, internships, and youth outreach programs, they aim to teach a professional work ethic in addition to providing technical training. Further, Double Edge has an ongoing partnership with the Springfield School District, where 77% of students attend from economically disadvantaged households, and summer programs available to these students provide an opportunity for high-quality creative and professional training that they might not otherwise see.

Our initial grant to Double Edge focused on their woodworking program, with an emphasis on improved safety, and the following year we supported their costume shop program with equipment that both made the shop more efficient and enabled additional interns and students to participate. This past year MCMA helped Double Edge upgrade and expand their metal shop program with drilling, cutting, welding, and fume extraction equipment. This upgrade is similarly expected to result in an increase in the number of interns and students who can be accommodated in the program. In short, we are very supportive of the work being done by this organization, and we are pleased with the way our grants have been put to use.



MCMA History

It's been quite a while since we wrote in-depth about the MCMA Exhibitions of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and more particularly about the MCMA medals (gold, silver, and bronze) that were awarded at them, so in this issue we will add to that story, at least with regard to the fine arts category. Because MCMA's Exhibitions were extremely well attended, they offered an opportunity for artisans to showcase their work, and many examples exist of young, or at least little-known, artists jump-starting their careers with the award of an MCMA medal. One such individual highlighted in that earlier article was the artist Robert William Vonnoh, who went on to a successful career as an artist and a teacher of art following his award of a Gold Medal at MCMA's 15th Exhibition in 1884.

At that same exhibition a Silver Medal was awarded to Ellen Day Hale for her oil painting titled *An Old Retainer*. We, of course, know this painting well, since it is owned by MCMA (purchased at the exhibition) and is displayed in our office. Ellen Day Hale (1855-1940) was the daughter of the famed clergyman and influential abolitionist Edward Everett Hale. (She was also related to author Harriet Beecher Stowe, and was a great, great grand-niece of Revolutionary War hero Nathan Hale.) She attended William Morris Hunt's school for painting in Boston, where she studied under Helen Mary Knowlton, and for two years attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts while it was directed by Thomas Eakins. [We'll get to those names soon.] She also studied for several years in Paris, and traveled extensively throughout her life before settling in Gloucester in 1932. Hale's 1885 *Self Portrait* is owned by and on view at the MFA in Boston.

In addition to Mary Cassatt, whom we discussed in an earlier article, our 13th Exhibition in 1878 was notable for two entrants, one of whom was William Morris Hunt (1824-1879). Born in Vermont to a wealthy and influential family, he was raised in Europe following the death of his father, studied art in Paris, and was well-respected as an artist by the time he returned to the United States in 1855. He established art schools in Newport, Rhode Island and Brattleboro, Vermont as well as Boston, and he soon became a very successful portrait painter, though many of his paintings were destroyed in the Great Boston Fire of 1872. In his later works he favored landscapes, and he completed a series of views of Niagara Falls the year before his death (an apparent suicide) in 1879. Hunt submitted seven oil paintings for this Exhibition, among them one titled *Marguerite*, and was awarded a Gold Medal by the judges for the excellence of the collection as a whole. Hunt was a founding member of the MFA's museum school, and the museum's William Morris Hunt Library is named in his honor. His former pupil Helen Mary Knowlton helped get that room established, and later wrote a biography of Hunt.

At right is *An Old Retainer* (1884) by Ellen Day Hale (1855-1940).



Below is the 1884-1885 *Self Portrait* by Ellen Day Hale.



At right is *Marguerite* (1870) by William Morris Hunt (1824-1879).



At that same exhibition were three entries by the artist Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), a realist painter who typically chose as his subjects the people of his hometown of Philadelphia. Over his four-decade career he often worked in outdoor venues, and took a keen interest in photography and the developing technology of motion photography to better understand the figure in motion. He studied art in Philadelphia and Paris, returning to this country in 1870. His first works upon his return were a group of eleven rowing scenes, one of which, *Turning the Stake*, was entered in our exhibition. That oil painting did not win recognition from our judges, but they did award Eakins a Silver Medal for his two watercolor entries, *Study of Negroes* (now named *The Dancing Lesson* and owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City) and *Young Lady Looking at a Flower*. This was the first award Eakins received for his artwork. Eakins is now acknowledged to be one of the most important artists in American art history, and as an instructor he was a highly influential presence. But he was a controversial figure who received little official recognition in his lifetime, and his artwork did not sell well. One of his largest paintings (at 8'x6.5'), *The Gross Clinic*, a realistic image of an operation being overseen by Philadelphia surgeon Dr. Samuel Gross, got an at-best lukewarm reception, though Eakins had high hopes for it, and it sold for only two hundred dollars. Today ... it's a different story. That same painting sold in 2008 for \$68 million dollars.

And one poor guy who just couldn't make the grade, it seems, was Dorchester-born Childe Hassam (1859-1935), who entered oil paintings and watercolors in three different exhibitions without so much as an honorable mention. His final attempt was his entry of *Day of the Grand Prix de Paris* at our 18th Exhibition in 1892. (Hassam painted two versions of this work, now called *Grand Prix Day*. One is now owned by the MFA in Boston; the other by the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut. We're not quite sure which of the two was shown at our exhibition.) Hassam, of course, despite the lack of encouragement shown by our judges, went on to a very, very successful career as an impressionist painter – by 1910 his paintings were selling for up to \$6,000 each – and now his works can be found in museums throughout the country. In this area, his most familiar image is likely his *At Dusk (Boston Common at Twilight)*, on view at the MFA in Boston.

Turning the Stake (1873)
by
Thomas
Eakins
(1844-1916).



The Dancing Lesson (1878)
by
Thomas
Eakins.



Grand Prix Day (1887)
by
Childe
Hassam
(1859-1935).



At Dusk (Boston Common at Twilight) (1886) by
Childe
Hassam.

