

# NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

## THE ELIE AND SARAH HIRSCHFELD COLLECTION, SCENES OF NEW YORK CITY

*The first artworks from philanthropists and art collectors Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld's extraordinary promised gift to the New-York Historical Society have joined the Museum's collection and go on view on February 12. Depicting New York locations still recognizable today, the works include The Boat Harbor (Gowanus Pier), ca. 1888, by William Merritt Chase; Early Spring, Washington Square, ca. 1910, by William James Glackens; Foggy Night, ca. 1922-25, by George Luks; and Dredging in the East River, ca. 1879, by John Henry Twachtman. The full Hirschfeld Collection exhibition—featuring a who's who of 19th- to 21st-century artists, including Isabel Bishop, Charles Burchfield, Marc Chagall, Christo, Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, Keith Haring, David Hockney, Edward Hopper, Franz Kline, Jacob Lawrence, Fernand Léger, Sol Lewitt, John Marin, Louise Nevelson, Georgia O'Keeffe, Norman Rockwell, and Andy Warhol, among others—opens at New-York Historical in fall 2021.*

John Henry Twachtman (1853-1903)

***Dredging in the East River***, ca. 1879

Oil on canvas; 12 x 18 in.

New-York Historical Society, Gift of the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City, 2020.35.4



*Dredging in the East River is the first work by Twachtman to enter the collections of New-York Historical. Its slashing brushstrokes and dark chiaroscuro forego the aestheticization that contemporaneous artists employed to draw a veil over the industrializing waterways of the city. The painting focuses instead on the violence of modernization and the destruction that progress entails—anticipating the early-20th century Ashcan School and its pursuit of a stark and brutal urban realism. **On view February 12***

William Merritt Chase (1849-1916)

***The Boat Harbor (Gowanus Pier)***, ca. 1888

Oil on panel; 8 1/4 x 13 in.

New-York Historical Society, Gift of the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City; 2020.35.1



*Chase lived in Brooklyn during the mid-1880s. The small portable panels that he carried allowed him, when inspired, to stop and paint the local views on*

site. This tonalist painting is one of at least nine works by Chase featuring the waterways of Gowanus. It is one of only three located Gowanus works and, with this gift to New-York Historical, has become the only such work to enter a public collection. **On view February 12**

George Luks

**Foggy Night**, ca. 1922-25

Oil on canvas; 30 1/4 x 25 in

New-York Historical Society, Gift of the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City, 2020.35.3

Fellow Ashcan School artist Everett Shinn described Luks as “a glutton for existence” who captured a varied New York from its “daily offerings of pictorial interest” to its “thickening sediment of night.” Here, the nocturnal setting casts a veil over the city, obscuring its hard edges and quieting its daytime tumult. It becomes a vehicle for Luks to retreat from the bravura of his bolder gestural work into a tonalist language of abstraction, simplified forms, and subtle monochromatic tones.

**On view February 12**



William James Glackens (1870-1938)

**Early Spring, Washington Square**, ca. 1910

Oil on canvas; 18 x 24 in.

New-York Historical Society, Gift of the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City, 2020.35.2

One of the founding members of the seminal American artist group “The Eight,” Glackens was committed to an anti-establishment form of art rooted in contemporary urban life. He kept a studio in Greenwich Village on the southern edge of Washington Square. This scene of quiet repose amid the city is one of over 20 paintings in which he explored everyday life as it unfolded in his neighborhood park—from its festivals to pedestrian commutes and quotidian pastimes. **On view February 12**



Robert Henri (1865-1929)

***Snow in Central Park*, 1902**

Oil on canvas; 26 x 32 in.

New-York Historical Society, Promised Gift of the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City

*Robert Henri's Snow in Central Park presents a stark depiction of the urban grounds. The rough brushstrokes, muddied snow, and oppressive sky rebuke the prettiness of Impressionist winter renderings popular at the time. The painting is characteristic of the Ashcan School that Henri founded—a movement focused on gritty and unidealized views of city life in New York that helped to usher in a vital American modernity.*



Oscar F. Bluemner (1867-1938)

***Coney Island*, 1904**

Watercolor, black ink, and gouache on paper;

6 1/4 x 10 1/4 inches

New-York Historical Society, Promised Gift of the Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New York City

*Coney Island was originally separated from Brooklyn by an estuary, which was filled in during the early 20th century. Bluemner's watercolor captures this early geography. The Lenape called the area "land without shadows" or "always in light." After the Civil War, resort operators transformed Coney Island into a series of amusement parks that showcased technological innovations, including electrical lighting after 1903. In the background, Bluemner included the parks' towers, glittering like the city of Oz. They contrast with the natural environment of the still-remote wetlands with its salt marshes and sand dunes depicted in the foreground.*



Preston Dickinson (1889-1930)

**High Bridge and High Bridge Water Tower**, ca. 1915

Charcoal and black ink on Japanese paper;  
22 x 9 3/4 in.

New-York Historical Society, Promised Gift of the  
Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New  
York City

*High Bridge, originally Aqueduct Bridge, is the oldest standing bridge in New York City. It opened as part of the Croton Aqueduct in 1848, and then reopened as a pedestrian walkway in 2015, after being closed for 45 years. The 140-foot span over the Harlem River connects the boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx. Dickinson also portrayed the 200-foot, octagonal High Bridge Water Tower on the Manhattan side. The artist's Precisionist drawing accentuates the sleek power of both structures by exaggerating their verticality and their technological modernity, transforming them into heroic sentinels.*



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)

**Gramercy Park**, ca. 1918

Oil on canvas; 30 1/8 x 19 in.

New-York Historical Society, Promised Gift of the  
Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld Collection, Scenes of New  
York City

*Gramercy Park is a hallmark of Norman Rockwell's early career. The painting offers a rare glimpse into the artist's childhood and student days in New York City. At the same time, it presages the signature features of his mature work: the penchant for visual storytelling and celebration of the everyday that would transform him into one of the most popular and beloved illustrators of 20th-century American life.*

