

A Personal Approach

Questroyal Fine Art owner Lou Salerno strives for an intimate connection

Questroyal Fine Art

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Judging by the artists Questroyal has hanging in their gallery—George Inness, Ralph Blakelock, Thomas Cole, Childe Hassam—what becomes apparent is the gallery's insistence on exhibiting art that allows one to make an emotional connection to it, to forge a personal bond that extends much further than merely acquiring a work of art.

These paintings are about emotion, plain and simple, about works of art that document not an individual artist's ability to depict a scene but about how that artist interprets the mood, feeling, emotion and cerebral connection to the scenes that play out upon his canvas.

A perfect example of this is George Inness' painting, *Palisades on the Hudson*. Inness, the most spiritually-inclined American landscape painter, was influenced — as was English artist and poet William Blake — by the spiritualism of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. For Inness, every landscape was a spiritual landscape and transcendence could be found within, by personalizing the connection to these places and finding the divine not just in, say, the bluffs overlooking the Hudson but in one's relationship to nature.

George Inness (1825–1894), *Palisades on the Hudson*, oil on canvas, 20¹/₈ x 30¹/₈" , signed lower right: G. Inness.

Lou Salerno: "George Inness, perhaps the most ethereally inclined of our greatest artists, could not resist the lure of the indomitable bluffs. The very spirit of the Palisades is visible in the dense and timeless atmosphere that takes precedence over even the most basic detail.

"Astute collectors understand the value of site-specific paintings, but some places are more valuable than others. With an audience of nearly 20 million people nearby, and the Hudson River as a watery conveyor, the Palisades could not have more exposure or appeal."



in the art he sells and who he sells it to





Childe Hassam
(1859-1935),
*Frenchman's Bay,
Mount Desert*, 1896,
oil on canvas,
26⁵/₁₆ x 35⁷/₈", signed
and dated lower right:
Childe Hassam, 1896

Lou Salerno: "Formerly in the possession of artistic visionaries Newman Montross and the Milch Galleries, *Frenchman's Bay, Mount Desert*, 1896, demonstrates the magnitude and range of Hassam's imagination. Whereas *Looking over Frenchman's Bay at Green Mountain* is a pensive celebration of a beloved island, this highly charged image hints at the energy and inspiration that artists and writers found there. The two works date from the same year, but here we see a different Hassam; forward-thinking and moving toward an expressionist style..."



Marsden Hartley
(1877-1943), *Mount
Katahdin, Snow Storm*,
1942, oil on masonite,
30 x 39¹⁵/₁₆", signed
and dated lower right:
MH/42

Lou Salerno: "Very near the peak and in the throes of a mighty blizzard, we witness the fierce power of nature. It is not terror that we experience as much as awe, which enlivens our spirit and imagination. "The paintings grand scale, desirable date and important subject matter establish it as rare and valuable for any collector of modern art."

Thomas Cole
(1801-1848),
Imaginary Landscape with Towering Outcrop, ca. 1846-1847, oil on canvas, 18½ x 14⅞"

Lou Salerno:
"Powerful, dangerous and untainted by civilization, the untamed American landscape informed Cole's concept of the spiritual and sublime. "At the very end of his life and at the pinnacle of his power (he died at just 47 years old), Cole created this seminal work, a rugged and raw depiction of a terrain recognizable only to that innermost part of our psyche where doubts and fears reside. All of us—and future generations—will look at it, ponder our own vulnerability, and ask the most elemental question: What is life?"



Thomas Cole is another early American artist who fits perfectly with these notions of the spiritual in nature. His landscape, *Imaginary Landscape with Towering Outcrop*, as the title tells us, comes not from the artist's need to recreate a scene but entirely from his own mind.

When looking at this painting, one is immediately confronted

by the tiny speck of a human presence completely surrounded and overwhelmed by the terrifying landscape that engulfs him. A rocky precipice seems to be ready to topple directly onto him at any time, the barren branches of the trees reach out to grab him. But, then you have the light from the cloud just starting to break over the highest peak and

its golden reflection in the lake in the foreground letting us know that spiritual bliss awaits to those who go searching for it.

It is the sublime and the beautiful, the beauty and danger, the challenge and reward that these early landscape painters found in the untamed American landscape.

It is no wonder, then, that Lou

Salerno has become such an important dealer in the works of Ralph Blakelock. Blakelock was one of the great visionaries of the 19th-century art world and once said "A picture is emotion not industry."

Blakelock was a self-taught painter, a true individual spirit, who dropped out of college and proceeded to wander the American West, living in random encampments and Indian settlements. His work is entirely personal and completely subjective. His nocturnes bathe the landscape in moonlight and relish in mystery, spirituality and the evocative power of the natural world.

One finds this emotional strand continuing even through the works of modernist Marsden Hartley. His painting *Mount Katahdin, Snow Storm* depicts an important spiritual moment for Hartley—"I have achieved the 'sacred pilgrimage' to Ktaadn. I feel as if I have seen God for the first time—I find him so nonchalantly solemn," is how Hartley put it in a letter to Adelaide Kuntz.

"We present the great modernist Marsden Hartley's masterful rendering of his beloved Mt. Katahdin, Maine, the mountain that inspired generations of artists and writers, including Frederic Church and Henry David Thoreau," says Salerno of the piece. ■

Ralph Albert Blakelock (1847-1919),
Moonlight on the River, oil on board,
4½ x 7½", signed lower right



