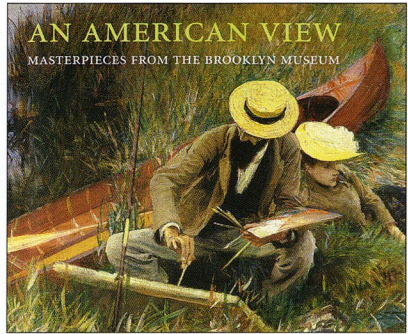


*An American View: Masterpieces from the Brooklyn Museum* by Teresa A. Carbone. London: D Giles Limited in association with the Brooklyn Museum. 160 pages, 85 color and 20 black-and-white illustrations. \$45.00 (hardcover)

### Review by Gail Leggio

Published alongside the monumental two-volume catalogue of paintings in the Brooklyn Museum, *An American View* is an attractive survey of highlights from the collection and should find a broad audience. Chapters such as “Coining American Subjects: The Antebellum Decades” and “Remaking the American Image: Cosmopolitan Painting at the Turn of the Century” provide historical context, tracing the evolution of collecting and exhibiting strategies as well as stylistic shifts. A handy chronology, which runs from 1824 to 2005, is particularly useful. While some eighteenth-century portraits—by John Singleton Copley, Charles Willson Peale and Gilbert Stuart, among others—are included, most of the work under consideration is from the nineteenth century, when American art came of age. The main body of the book is devoted to full-page reproductions with facing commentaries that are notably informative and engaging.



Asher B. Durand’s *The First Harvest in the Wilderness* (1855) reflects the initial mission of the Brooklyn Institute, forerunner of the Brooklyn Museum. Commissioned directly from the artist, *The First Harvest* was paid for by a bequest fund intended to establish a permanent public art collection in the city. The commentary on Abbott Handerson Thayer’s *My Children* (c. 1896–1910) focuses on the artist’s working method and the issue of “finishing,” as well as on his secularization of Christian iconography. The original Renaissance-style frame, crucial to the altarpiece-like composition, is reproduced. Discussing *On the Delaware River* (1861–63) by George Inness, Carbone remarks on the “dramatically elevated vantage point and the animated description of the cloud-filled sky and strong, shifting light.” On a *Peaceable Kingdom* (c. 1833–34) by Edward Hicks, she moves from formal analysis to historical background, attributing his naïve manner to “Quaker objections to fine art, which was considered perniciously non-utilitarian and idolatrous in its realism.” Among other works receiving insightful attention are an elegant 1822 still life of velvety fruit by Raphaele Peale, John Singer Sargent’s virtuoso *Paul Heller Sketching with His Wife* (1889) and George Bellows’s *A Morning Snow* (1910), a lively piece of modern urban observation. *An American View* is at once a delightful picture book, a succinct survey of American art and an intriguing case study in museum-building in the United States.