

Howard Ashman Patterson (1891-1970)

(Called "Pat" by friends and family) was born in Philadelphia. His father Elliot was a lawyer, and his mother was the granddaughter of the founder of the Remington Arms company in 1793, Eliphet Remington.

Pat attended art school by the prompting of his mother who saw his talent for drawing and painting. He attended the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Design (1908-1910), and onto the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (1910-1913). He is represented by a painting in the permanent collection of the Academy and later served on the board.

Some of his professors at the Academy who had a large influence on his art and his career were Arthur B. Carles, Henry McCarter, and the most influential was Robert Henri. According to Henri "the art student that should be and is so rare, is the one who's life is spent in the love and the culture of his personal sensations, the cherishing of his emotions, never undervaluing them, the pleasure of exclaiming them to others, and an eager search for their clearest expression." These are indelible words spoken by a great teacher, who relocated to New York City in 1912 with a number of his colleagues and students following in pursuit. He relocated at the Art Student's League where 5 of the famous "Eight" were from Philadelphia, John Sloan, William Glackens, George Luks, and Everett Shinn. Another junior member was the young modernist Stuart Davis (1892-1964) also from Philadelphia. This group was later known as the "Ashcan School".

There were many influences at this time on the young Howard (Pat), with the notorious Armory Show in 1913 and all of the influx of different styles and "ism's" from Europe. Howard must have been very excited about his artistic prospects but at the same time somewhat bewildered. He followed suit when seeing firsthand where most of this "new painting and new art" influence was coming from. He traveled to Paris in 1914 soon after finishing school, and took a studio at 11 Rue Scribe in an area where other up-and-coming artists lived. His experience there was short lived, as after just 4 months it was evident that war was breaking out.

Upon returning to the U.S., Howard once again took up studies at the Art Student's League. His influences were expanded by the artists there, among them Guy Pene du Bois, George Bellows and George Ault who within the next few years would spend summers painting in Woodstock, NY. One can only imagine the excitement of a new felt modernist approach to painting that these artists brought to light during this time. Howard as well as the others held on to a more representational approach to modernism.

Howard's work during this period was done largely in plein aire with dashing strokes of loaded pigment often times highly color keyed and expressionistic. Other times he would capture a more somber mood, as in "After the Rain" or "Wet", from 1914-17.

It was during this critical phase of his career development that he was called into duty with the Armed Forces from May 1917 to February 1919. The President of the PAFA wrote his Commanding Officer of the 19th Engineers, recommending Howard's transfer to the camouflage (or deceptive scenery) service, saying Howard was "an arrived artist of talent". While serving, the only artwork he was able to produce were small colorful, little gems of war time pageantry that he sent to his mother during their correspondence.

Howard's return to the US in 1919 took him out west to Colorado and New Mexico at the suggestion of John Sloan and Robert Henri. The following year he was joined by George Bellows and Randall Davey along with Will Shuster (member of Los Cinco Pinteros) who was also originally from Philadelphia.

The first major exhibition that Howard displayed his works from his travels in the Southwest was at the Denver Art Museum in 1924 with paintings from Colorado and New Mexico most notably "Christmas at San Felipe New Mexico" and "Deerdance Interior". He received a critics review "Whatever Philadelphia, New York City and Woodstock did in the way of laying the foundation it was Colorado and NM that first revealed Mr. Patterson to himself." It was in Denver that he met and married Elizabeth Mary Perrigo "Betty" who was born in Chicago in 1899. Betty was a dancer and instructor who became a radio personality and writer.

After becoming somewhat established in the Santa Fe community for a few years, exhibiting at the Santa Fe Museum of Art which was established by Robert Henri and others in 1919, the peripatetic artist decided once again to travel back to the south of France.

In June 1925 the Pattersons settled in the small town of La Gaude in the Alps maritime region. E Ambrose Webster (of the Webster dictionary fame) was also in residence at La Gaude at that time period. The works Howard produced during his time here were some of his finest from in and around Ville France sur Mer. The expensive French linen canvasses that he produced had a highly personalized quality described by an art critic from his show at the Allard Art Gallery as "With exceptional qualities as a colorist, he is a real painter" "A clear and calm interpretation of landscapes and new and subtle sensitiveness with his still life's and interior scenes." The French government purchased his still life "Flox" for the Luxembourg Museum. Another article from the times... "Philadelphia Artist Seeks Fame" was the heading with a photo of Howard and Ezra Pound the American poet and fellow Philadelphian.

For the birth of their first son, Remington, Guy Pene du Bois stood in as Godfather, but it was shortly thereafter that they moved back to Santa Fe to the community Camino del Monte Sol, made famous by Los Cinco Pinteros., next door to Will Shuster. On Feb 1, 1928 their second son Robert Burns (Burns) was born. Here Howard renewed his association with the Santa Fe art community including John Sloan, Randall Davey, and Robert Henri and others.

His career starts to come together when he showed alongside some notables in Santa Fe as well as New York at the Kraushaar Gallery. His works mostly from France were shown here and one art critic wrote "It is not too much to say of Howard Patterson that he is an artist of decided distinction both as a craftsman and a colorist. The telling effect he produces in so simple a composition as his still life called "Early America" a white china tea pot placed against a paisley shawl showing delicacy and precision."

Despite critical success, the country had entered in financial distress. By 1930 he was showing along side a lot of the greats that seemed to have survived and are looked upon today as representing that period of American Art during the 1920's. He had shows in NY, Santa Fe, Paris, San Francisco and Chicago during this time but by 1932 his most productive years had already passed. Although he continued to paint for another 30 years, it was never again to the same acclaim.

His last exhibition was in 1949 at the Academy of Arts in Newark, NJ. Exhibited were 22 works ranging the whole of his career, from the "Deer Dances" of New Mexico to the French Riviera to the parks of New York City, where he lived during the 30's and 40's as a teacher and designer. John Sloan's testimonial to the show says;

"Howard Patterson is an adult artist who has maintained his integrity through the rising tide of 'modernist' influences and imitation, and the financially successful 'monkey-shines' and mysticism of the past and present hectic decade.... His paintings of the Southwest and our Indians in his landscapes and figure subjects, interiors, figure of still life, and masculine flower pieces while showing a subtle consciousness of what is wholesome in the modern movement are very personal and never academic. Pat is a thoughtful and independent painter whose work has charm, color and individuality. His exhibition has particular timely interest."

Pat retained the paintings that were most valuable to him and he refused to sell them for a "dime on the dollar". As a result the Patterson family inherited the collection of over 40 paintings which are still in the family.

A painting recently showed up at a well known gallery in NY in 2006 in a show titled American Art from 1860 to 1940 alongside other notables such as John Singer Sargent. Sometimes it is all about the company you keep and nothing else.

Looking back from our vantage point, one can see how an artist can "slip through the cracks". Here is an artist worthy of recognition of the work that he did, and deserves a place in American Art as a piece of the mosaic that makes up American Art.