



fig. 1 F. Gutekunst, **Thomas Eakins**, ca. 1875, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Mark Lutz. (Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art.)

POINTS OF CONTACT: THOMAS EAKINS, ROBERT HARRIS, AND THE ART OF LÉON BONNAT

During a meeting of the Ontario Society of Artists in March of 1885, the members present voted that the thanks of the Society be expressed officially to certain artists who had contributed paintings to the current Art Loan Exhibition. Further to this expression of gratitude was the decision to grant to these individuals the privilege of honorary membership in the Society.¹

Outstanding among the eight artists named was the American painter Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) (fig. 1). Indeed Eakins's participation in the 1885 Art Loan Exhibition, sponsored by the Ontario Society of Artists, and the honour of membership subsequently bestowed upon him, marks a significant confluence of the Canadian and American artistic communities. Greatly respected by the several young Canadian artists who had been his students, Eakins was also admired by older Canadian artists who shared many of the same aesthetic and stylistic sources and principles. Eakins, in turn, demonstrated his respect for his Canadian associates by selecting works of deep personal significance for the Toronto exhibition.

By 1885 Thomas Eakins was best known in Canada as the teacher of such promising young Canadian artists as Paul Peel (1860-1892) and George Agnew Reid (1860-1947). Eakins's innovative curriculum and techniques of art instruction had been widely discussed in the art press since the late 1870's. It was probably George Agnew Reid, member in good standing of the Ontario Society of Artists, who invited Eakins to send his pictures to the 1885 Art Loan Exhibition. Reid had only recently resettled in Toronto after two and one-half years' study with Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.²

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The 1885 Art Loan Exhibition was the first Canadian exhibition to which Eakins sent his paintings. He obliged his good friend and former

pupil by selecting four of his best: a painting called *Pushing for Rail* (fig. 3), probably one of the pair Eakins had exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1875; a watercolour of *Base Ball Players Practising* (fig. 2) of 1875; the *William Rush Carving his Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill* (fig. 4), painted in 1876-7; and a large portrait entitled *Elizabeth at the Piano* (fig. 6) of 1875. Each of these four paintings represented a certain milestone in Eakins's creative development. Together they provided an incisive survey of his artistic interests and career accomplishments.

Three of the four paintings Eakins sent to Toronto had been exhibited frequently in various American cities. The watercolour *Base Ball Players Practising* (fig. 2) was typical of the paintings of male athletes, notably professional rowers, with which Eakins first made his name at exhibitions in New York and his native Philadelphia during the mid-1870's.³ The painting entitled *Pushing for Rail* (fig. 3), may well have been one of the pair of hunting pictures Eakins submitted successfully to the Paris Salon of 1875, thus gaining acceptance in the French artistic fraternity. It was a crowning achievement in the early professional career of the young American who had laboured for three and a half years, from 1866 to 1870, in the teaching ateliers of Paris.⁴

In *William Rush Carving his Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill* (fig. 4), Eakins composed a personal statement of creative purpose. The subject was adapted from a little-known anecdote of local Philadelphia history, which told of a certain Miss Van Uxem, a woman of good family, who, in 1809, modelled for the wood carver William Rush. Rush had been commissioned to create a fountain to decorate the grounds of Philadelphia's waterworks Pump House in the city's Centre Square.⁵ As a centrepiece to the fountain, he carved the figure of a nymph carrying a bittern to symbolize the Schuylkill River that runs through the city of Philadelphia and was the city's chief source of fresh water. It was for this figure that Miss Van Uxem was said to have posed. Legend does not record that she actually posed in the nude, but Eakins portrayed her so in order to emphasize the beauty and expressive power of the human figure.

As modern scholars have pointed out, Eakins's adaptation of the Rush story dated from the time of his first appointment to the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy in the mid 1870's.⁶ Eakins saw Rush as an artistic and spiritual forbearer, a man who had also dedicated his talents and his teaching to the human figure. The painting became a pictorial response to



fig. 2 Thomas Eakins, **Base Ball Players Practising**, 1875, Watercolour, 27.6 x 32.7 cm, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R.I., Jesse Metcalf and Walter H. Kimball Fund, (Photo: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.)



fig. 3 Thomas Eakins, **Pushing for Rail**, 1874, Oil on canvas, 33 x 76.3 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Arthur H. Hearn Fund, 1916. (Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.)



fig. 4 Thomas Eakins, *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, 1876-77, Oil on canvas, 51.1 x 67.3 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Thomas Eakins and Miss Mary Adeline Williams. (Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art.)



fig. 5 Walter M. Dunk, *Men's Life Class*, 1879, Oil on composition board, 26 x 32.4 cm, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Commissioned by the Academy, 1879. (Photo: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.)

the resistance Eakins encountered to his own use of the human figure as the focus of his teaching.

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Eakins had studied at the Pennsylvania Academy during the early 1860's. In 1877, he was appointed as an instructor at the art school and quickly assumed primary teaching duties. Eakins was supported enthusiastically by an administration directed by leading members of the local business community. By 1882 when he was appointed Director of the Academy Schools, Eakins had established a curriculum at the Pennsylvania Academy which many observers considered as the most progressive in America. ⁷

In 1879, the art and literary critic William C. Brownell noted in his report entitled "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," for *Scribner's Monthly*, that the Pennsylvania Academy's directors "conduct the Philadelphia art schools upon an elaborate scale, and provide for art students more advantages, from a material point of view, than can be obtained anywhere else." Brownell described a rich and well-organized curriculum which easily surpassed the offerings of art schools in other major American cities:

... Models, male or female, are provided in abundance. . . . Dissections are arranged for to the heart's content of the students. . . . Modeling is cared for as well as painting and drawing. The collection of casts from the antique is larger than any in New York. . . . The Academy's large collection of engravings and small but useful library are accessible to the students. There are two professors of drawing and painting and a lecturer on artistic anatomy. One would say, surely, that a school with such apparent advantages as these could sustain with equanimity the reproach of provincialism, and indeed take pride in being 'a kind of family affair'. ⁸

It was Eakins who encouraged students, male and female, for the Academy was coeducational, to forego the conventional sequence of drawing after casts of antique sculpture thence to life drawing. Rather he favoured *painting* after the model as soon as possible ⁹ (fig. 5). "The main thing that the brush secures is the instant grasp of the grand construction of a figure," Eakins remarked, ". . . once that is got, the details follow naturally."¹⁰ Classes in clay modelling and a rigorous course of instruction in gross anatomy and dissection assisted the students in understanding the principles of this "grand construction." Though some observers character-

ized Eakins's emphasis on structure as clinical and dispassionate, they could not fault his thoroughness as a teacher. And the Academy students were devoted to him.

For Canadian art students, the curriculum of the Pennsylvania Academy offered unparalleled opportunities for study from the life model. Social restrictions against nudity in many Canadian communities severely limited professional art study and so the more ambitious and talented of Canada's students were forced to emigrate for instruction. George Reid had read Brownell's description of the Academy curriculum with excitement. "All this appealed very strongly to me because of its radical character and thoroughness and I resolved to continue my training there," he later recalled.¹¹

Eakins's painting of William Rush (fig. 4) was his homage to a fellow Philadelphia artist who had appreciated the beauty of the human form. It was also a personal declaration of Eakins's own creative and pedagogical principles. Not everyone in Philadelphia agreed with Eakins's methods. So strong was Eakins's commitment to study from the nude model, that it ultimately proved to be his undoing. In 1886, the Academy administration, alarmed by the obsessive single-mindedness of Eakins's teaching, would demand his resignation from the faculty.¹²

By sending the Rush painting to the Toronto exhibition, Eakins expressed his solidarity with Canadian colleagues who had encountered similar community resistance to the use of the nude in their art and teaching. To young Canadian colleagues such as George Reid, who had travelled to Eakins's Pennsylvania Academy schools to specifically acquire training unavailable in their native country, the *William Rush* must have spoken volumes.

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Eakins's fourth contribution to the Toronto exhibition was a portrait, entitled *Elizabeth at the Piano* (fig. 6). Painted in 1875, this study of Elizabeth Crowell, sister of the artist's fiancée was one of a series of paintings of family members and close friends Eakins produced throughout the 1870's. Most of these were not intended for public exhibition, although Eakins had included the *Elizabeth at the Piano* among the five pictures he exhibited in the Fine Arts Section of the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876. Since then, however, Eakins had sent the portrait of Elizabeth to only one other exhibition.¹³



fig. 6 Thomas Eakins, **Elizabeth at the Piano**, 1875, Oil on canvas, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, Gift of anonymous donor. (Photo: Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover.)

Just under life-size in scale, the canvas was appreciably larger than the other three paintings shown at the Toronto exhibition, and it was painted in a startlingly different manner. In the three smaller paintings, Eakins constructed his designs with the precise, almost calligraphic brushwork of a master draughtsman, building up glazes from a palette limited to earth colours to produce a cool, generalized tonality. This technique was derived from Eakins's study of works by Thomas Couture (1815-79) as well as those of his teacher Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904). In *Elizabeth at the Piano*, he showed himself a master of dramatic chiaroscuro, shrouding the player and instrument in flickering gaslit shadows energized with woven brushstrokes of thick impasto. As a reviewer for the *Toronto Globe* noted admiringly, the painting, though visually somewhat unattractive, was a technical tour-de-force:

. . . [The painting] is noticeable for the amount of expression which the artist has been enabled to impart to the subject by the effect of side lights, relieving the gloom and sombre head. The undertaking was a bold one, and though admirably carried out and resulting in a picture full of significance and sensibility, does not appeal to the popular taste as strongly as the more conventional treatment. The effect is too subtle for the appreciation of merely superficial or negligent observers.¹⁴

Such comments would have been familiar to Eakins, whose works the viewing public seldom considered "pretty." But fellow artists could and did appreciate the American's abilities.

Fellow artists would, for example, have recognized the allusions in Eakins's paintings to the styles and techniques of the French artists who had been his teachers. In the three smaller paintings Eakins included stylistic references to the work of his first teacher Jean-Léon Gérôme. In the portrait of *Elizabeth at the Piano*, Eakins imitated the work of French painter Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), with whom he had studied briefly in 1869.

Born in southwestern France, Léon Bonnat had studied in Spain before travelling to Paris in 1853 to continue his art studies. At the Salons of the later 1850's and early 1860's, Bonnat exhibited religious subjects and genre studies of Italian peasant life painted in a robust realist style which earned the praise of France's leading critics. By the time young Thomas Eakins joined his atelier in 1869, Bonnat was fast becoming an influential member of the French art establishment.¹⁵

During the 1870's, Bonnat acquired a reputation as a painter of startlingly realistic scenes from religious history. But it was as a portrait painter that Bonnat achieved his greatest celebrity. Beginning in 1877 with his portrait of Adolphe Thiers, first President of the Third Republic

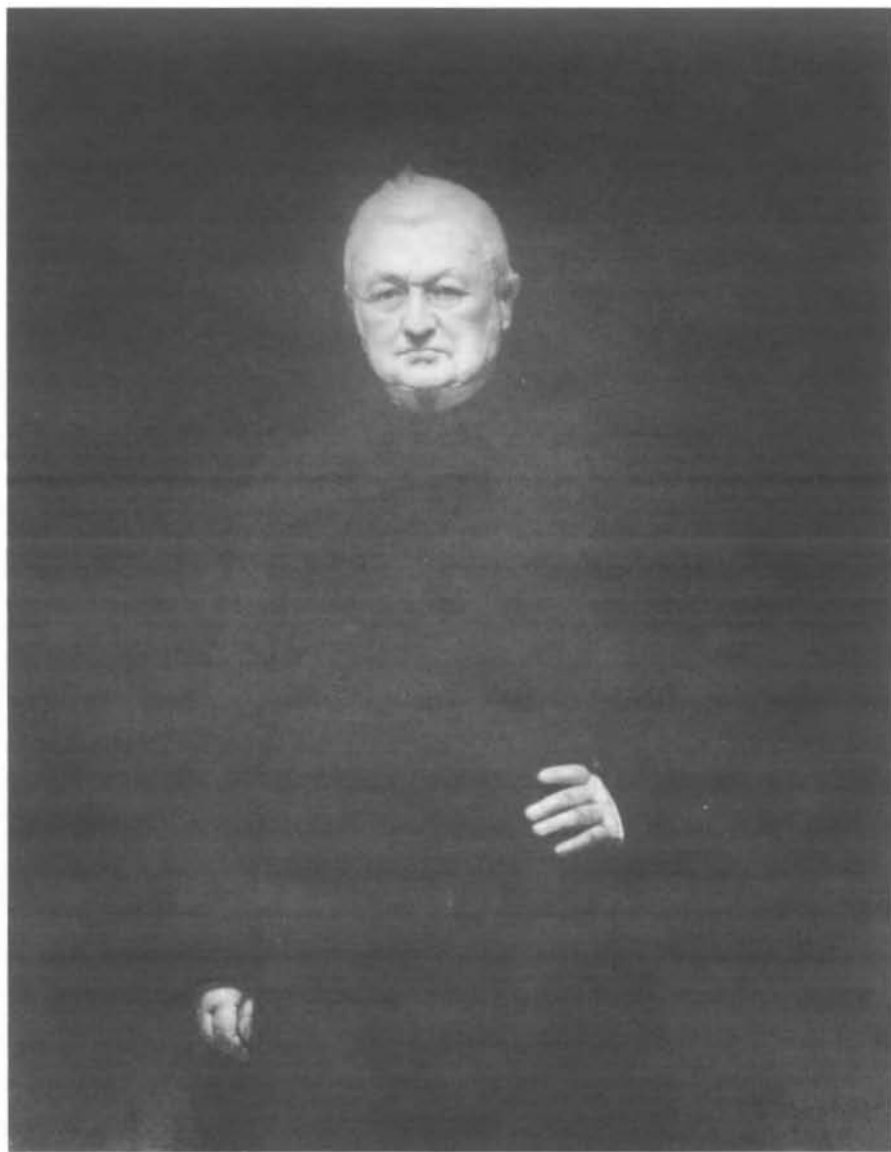


fig. 7 Léon Bonnat, **Portrait of Adolphe Thiers**, 1877, Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris. (Photo: Musées Nationaux, Paris.)

(fig. 7), Bonnat rapidly came to prominence as the "official" painter of republican France. Wrote one American critic:

... Till they have seen themselves on Bonnat's canvas, statesmen doubt their popularity, authors question their genius, actresses tremble for their laurels, millionaires suspect their influence. . . . To have been painted by Bonnat is to have proved yourself Somebody; to have had the seal set on your hard-won reputation; to have won, as it were, official recognition of your merit, your weight, your talent, your wealth.¹⁶

A great part of Bonnat's success as a portraitist can be attributed to his meticulous attention to detail. According to one biographer, Bonnat actually calibrated the heads and facial features of his subjects as though he were preparing an anthropometric diagram. At a time when popular philosophers debated theories of racial origins, Bonnat's scientific ap-



fig. 8 Robert Harris, *Ante-Room of the Atelier Bonnat, Paris, 1882*, Oil on panel, 31.6 x 38.5 cm, Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown, P.E.I., Gift of the Robert Harris Trust, 1965. (Photo: Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown.)

proach was considered appropriately "modern" by patrons and public alike. Bonnat combined this painstaking exactitude with a lush painting technique, trowelling colour onto his canvases to create vibrant surface patterns and textures around the calculated poses of his subjects, to the point, some critics noted, that his portraits seemed created from strokes of plaster and sand. It was this gestural technique that Eakins imitated in his *Elizabeth at the Piano*.

Bonnat had begun accepting students in the mid-1860's. He maintained two teaching ateliers, one for men in the rue Lavel (fig. 8) and a second for women in the rue Caumartin, which he visited on an average of every two weeks. Students were required to pay only a nominal fee of 25 francs for the model's services. Bonnat's was one of a number of teaching ateliers which operated independently of the official government-sponsored Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It was especially popular with young foreign artists who either could not gain admission to the Ecole ateliers or who desired an alternative curriculum to that of the Ecole.¹⁷

Little over a month after Eakins arrived, Bonnat closed the atelier in order to make an extended visit to his home town of Bayonne. The American was not overly dismayed. Eakins was ambivalent in his opinion of Bonnat as a teacher and had decided that prolonged study would probably do him little good.¹⁸ He recognized the older man's talent and rapidly growing reputation, but was puzzled by Bonnat's shyness and "laissezfaire" approach to teaching. Soon after leaving Bonnat's atelier Eakins described the artist in a letter to his father:

. . . He is the most timid man I ever saw in my life & has trouble to join three words together. If you ask him the simplest question about what he thinks is the best way to do a thing, he won't tell you. He says do it just as you like. He will never impose any way of working on his boys & so some commence drawing first & some slap on the color first and draw with it afterwards smearing it about scraping off & plastering it on with a knife or their fingers or any way & others only rub on the color very lightly with their fingers or small brushes & he never finds fault with any thing but the result. . . .¹⁹

But Eakins's opinion of Bonnat as a teacher did not detract from his profound admiration for Bonnat the painter. Like Bonnat, Eakins became a devoted student of the seventeenthcentury Spanish masters Velasquez and Ribera, and patterned his mature portrait style after works he had

studied in Spain during a six-month trip in 1870. Although Eakins left Europe for good in 1870, he made an effort to follow the progress of Bonnat's art and career in the art press as well as through correspondence with friends who had remained in Paris.²⁰

One Canadian artist who would have appreciated Eakins's allusions to the portrait technique of Léon Bonnat was Robert Harris (1849-1919) (fig. 9). A native of Prince Edward Island who had taken his early art training with William Rimmer at the Lowell Institute in Boston. Harris joined the atelier Bonnat first in 1878.²¹ Unlike Eakins, however, the Canadian was thoroughly satisfied with Bonnat as a teacher, and returned for a second year of study in 1881.

An adept student, Harris followed closely in the footsteps of his French mentor when mapping his own career. Upon returning from France in 1879, Harris established himself in Toronto as a teacher and an organizer. By 1881, he was already a past VicePresident and Treasurer of the Ontario Society of Artists and a founding member of the Royal Canadian Academy. In 1883, Harris's reputation was ensured when he received a commission from the federal government to paint Canada's *Fathers of Confederation*, 1883 (Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum), a group portrait commemorating the constitutional conferences which had preceded the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867.²² Although also a talented genre painter, Harris thereafter was best known as Canada's "official" portraitist and until his death in 1919, dutifully recorded the features of the young country's leading citizens.

There is no record that Harris and Eakins ever met. However, the two artists certainly were known to each other. Even before his first trip to Paris, Harris would have encountered Eakins's name in exhibition reviews from New York and other American cities.²³ And in the atelier Bonnat, Harris could have heard mention of Eakins from such longtime American habitués as Edwin Howland Blashfield, who had known Eakins since the late 1860's.²⁴

But it was as a fellow teacher that Harris was most familiar with Eakins and his work. As an instructor at the Ontario School of Art from 1879 to 1881, Harris introduced his students to the broad painterly technique he had learned in Bonnat's atelier. One of these students was George Agnew Reid, who described Harris's teaching approach:

Harris taught us how to look at objects, no matter what character, as made up of a series of planes and masses which, if



fig. 9 Robert Harris, **Self-Portrait**, undated, Watercolour on paper, 27.1 x 20.2 cm, Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown, P.E.I., Gift of the Robert Harris Trust, 1965. (Photo: Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown.)

broadly simplified, could be resolved into finer and finer planes and masses until every detail could be pursued and given its proper proportion and value. . . .

In later years, when I went to Paris to study, I recognized this as the French method, as the professors constantly used the expressions 'Les valeurs,' 'le ton vaste,' 'Dessinée par la masse.' Draw or paint by mass and observe the exact tone or the values.²⁵

When George Reid read about Thomas Eakins's teaching methods in *Scribner's Monthly*, he thought them radical and innovative. Robert Harris would have recognized a fellow student from the Paris ateliers. Moreover Harris probably encouraged Reid to move south and enrol at Eakins's school as the next best thing to study in Paris. It cannot be simple coincidence that Reid enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy within a year of Harris's departure from Toronto for Paris late in 1881.

After returning from his second Paris trip in 1882, Robert Harris moved to Montréal. Here he continued to maintain ties with his friends and associates in Toronto, most notably with Reid. Evidence exists that Harris not only visited the Art Loan Exhibition during March of 1885, but that he paid particular attention to the four paintings sent by Thomas Eakins. Indeed, we know that Harris studied Eakins's *Elizabeth at the Piano*, because he copied it. A year later, in 1886, while working in England, Harris painted his now well-known picture entitled *Harmony* (fig. 10). A portrait of his young wife Elizabeth, at the piano, Harris's composition echoed Eakins's portrait in subject and design.

Harris's decision to adapt Eakins's portrait in his own work indicates the Canadian's high regard for his American colleague. In fact, Harris may have been responding to a conscious gesture by the American. When invited to send paintings to the Toronto exhibition, Eakins had selected four which communicated specific ideas to his Canadian audience. The two sporting pictures documented the artist's public career as painter-exhibitor. In the *William Rush*, also one of his best-known exhibition pictures, Eakins articulated his teaching philosophy and his desire for creative solidarity within the artistic community.

Elizabeth at the Piano, by comparison, was a private family picture, not at all typical of the exhibition portraits for which Eakins was well-known. Why then did Eakins send it to Toronto? Eakins's inclusion of the portrait seems an anomaly until we recall Robert Harris's response to this picture



fig.10 Robert Harris, **Harmony**, ca. 1886, Oil on panel, 30.5 x 24.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
(Photo: National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.)

in particular. Eakins's strongest connection to Canada was his close friendship with George Agnew Reid. Through Reid, Eakins would have known of Harris, a fellow teacher and student of Bonnat. What better way to acknowledge Harris than by sending the painting that most effectively communicated Eakins's own regard for the French artist who had inspired Harris's teaching and art: Léon Bonnat.

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Notes

¹ Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario Society of Artists Papers, Minutes for meeting of 2 March, 1885. The individuals nominated for honorary membership were: Mrs. Alex Cameron, Thomas Eakins, W. Scott, Russel Inglis, C. Nelson, J. Spooner, E.J. Jarvis and W. Townsend. However, Inglis, Jarvis and Townsend do not appear on any subsequent published lists of the Ontario Society of Artists' honorary members.

² Eakins may also have been contacted by OSA member Otto Jacobi during the early 1880's, who was then residing in Philadelphia. There is no direct evidence that Eakins and Jacobi were acquainted. However, it is noteworthy that both artists travelled from Philadelphia west to the Dakota Territory during 1886.

³ Eakins's submissions to the Art Loan Exhibition are listed in a review of the exhibition published in *The Globe* on 3 March, 1885. For Eakins's work in watercolour, and the popularity of watercolour painting in general in the United States during the 1870's and 1880's, see Kathleen A. FOSTER, "Makers of the American Watercolour Movement: 1860-1890" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1982).

⁴ Eakins enrolled in the atelier of Jean-Léon Gérôme at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in early October of 1866. He attended intermittently until 1869, although he failed to matriculate and gain admission to the Ecole proper. During those years, Gérôme was frequently absent and his atelier was supervised by Gustave Boulanger. Eakins also worked briefly in the sculpture atelier of Augustin Dumont and finally with Léon Bonnat. See Elizabeth MILROY, "Thomas Eakins's Artistic Training, 1860-1870," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1986).

⁵ The Pump House, which began operation in 1801, had been designed and constructed by the English architect Benjamin Latrobe. For the history of Rush's commission, and Eakins's knowledge of the appreciation of his predecessor's works, see Linda BANTEL, *et al.* *William Rush, American*

Sculptor (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1982) pp. 9-30 *passim*, pp. 31-46 *passim* and pp. 114-117.

⁶ This version of *William Rush* . . . was the first in a series of paintings on a theme to which Eakins would return throughout his career. See Darrel SEWELL, *Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982), chap. VI, and Elizabeth JOHNS, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), chap. 4.

⁷ Several articles and reports concerning Eakins's innovations at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts appeared in the American art press during the early 1880's. The most notable were BROWNELL's "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," published in the September, 1879, issue of *Scribner's Monthly* and the article by Fairman ROGERS, entitled "The Schools of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," which appeared in *The Penn Monthly* in June of 1881. Rogers was Chairman of the Committee on Schools of the Pennsylvania Academy and Eakins's strongest ally. News of Eakins's teaching reached Paris in the report on *L'enseignement du dessin aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique* written by Félix RÉGAMEY and published in 1881. Much of this report was borrowed from Brownell's account.

⁸ William C. BROWNELL, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," *Scribner's Monthly*, 18 (September, 1879), p.738.

⁹ While Eakins's teaching methods were a novelty in North American art schools, contemporaries who, like Eakins, had studied in Paris, recognized the French sources of his innovations. Indeed, Eakins's chief ally in the Pennsylvania Academy administration, Fairman Rogers, advertised these sources in his 1881 article:

. . . The [Academy] schools are organized much as they would be by a club of artists who had associated themselves for the purpose of providing rooms, models and an instructor or critic, as is done by the Art Students' League in New York, [and] the principal schools in Paris outside the government schools, such as Bonnat's [and] Carolus-Duran's, etc.

Fairman ROGERS, pp. 453-454.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.141.

¹¹ George REID to E.L. Babcock, 4 December, 1939. Quoted in Christine BOYANOSKI, *Sympathetic Realism: George Reid and the Academic Tradition* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1986), p.16.

¹² For nineteenth-century Philadelphia's prudish attitudes to the nude, see JOHNS, pp. 102-103. The exact circumstances of Eakins's resignation are still unclear although explanations, scholarly and spurious, abound. However, analysis of the personal papers and documents relating specifically to Eakins's tenure and resignation from the Academy which were recovered recently in Philadelphia should shed some light on the incident. Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

¹³ Eakins's sixth entry to the Philadelphia Centennial, the controversial *Gross Clinic*, was displayed in the Model Post Hospital, part of the Medical Department exhibits. See JOHNS, chap. 3. Eakins exhibited a painting, called only *At the Piano*, that may have been the portrait of Elizabeth, at the Third Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists in New York in 1880.

¹⁴ "Art Loan Exhibition," *The Globe* 3 March, 1885, p.6.

¹⁵ Émile ZOLA later would call Bonnat "le plus puissant et le plus solide de nos peintres," in his review of "L'Ecole française à l'exposition de 1878 . . ." for the *Messager de l'Europe*, reprinted in *Salons, recueillis, annotés et présentés*, ed. by F.W.J. HEMMINGS *et al* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1959), p.208.

¹⁶ [ISHMAEL], "French Painters 'Chez Eux.' III," *The Illustrated American*, 27 September 1890, p.609.

¹⁷ In fact, many independent teachers, including Bonnat, had close ties to the Ecole, often substituting for absent teachers and serving on various competition juries. Bonnat was appointed to the Ecole faculty in 1888 and appointed director of the school in 1905. For a survey of one group of Bonnat's students, see Henri USSELMAN, "Léon Bonnat, d'après les témoignages de ses élèves nordiques," in *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, 2 (1986), pp. 67-76.

¹⁸ Eakins was familiar with Bonnat and his work long before enrolling at the atelier because several of his American acquaintances had chosen to attend the independent atelier rather than affiliating themselves with studios at the Ecole. Eakins's childhood friend William Sartain had been working at Bonnat's for several months by the summer of 1869 and Eakins may simply have wanted to join his

friend during yet another of Gérôme's absences from the Ecole. See MILROY. Eakins first mentions his move to the independent atelier in a letter to his mother dated 3 August, 1869. Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection.

¹⁹ Thomas EAKINS to Benjamin Eakins, 8 September 1869. Transcription by Lloyd Goodrich. Lloyd and Edith Havens Goodrich Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

²⁰ In 1880, Eakins produced one of his most powerful, if idiosyncratic images, a painting of *The Crucifixion*, in direct emulation of Bonnat's celebrated canvas of 1874 for the Palais de Justice in Paris. The *Crucifixion* is now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

²¹ For a biography of Harris, see Moncrieff WILLIAMSON, *Island Painter: the Life of Robert Harris (1849-1919)* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1983). An extensive catalogue of the artist's works is included in WILLIAMSON, *Robert Harris* (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1973).

²² Harris's monumental portrait was lost when fire destroyed the Parliament Buildings in 1916.

²³ There is a popular misconception that Eakins was generally ignored by the critical press of his day. While this is true of his later career, during the 1870's and early 1880's, Eakins was a frequent contributor to major American exhibitions. His powerful brand of realism often sparked discussion and controversy in newspaper and magazine reviews.

²⁴ Edwin Howland Blashfield (1848-1936) attended the atelier Bonnat from 1867 to 1870 and again from 1874 to 1880. Upon his return to the United States, he became best known as a mural painter, doing work at various American state Capitols as well as at the Library of Congress in Washington. Eakins mentions Blashfield in letters home from Paris in 1867 and in 1869. Eakins Research Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

²⁵ Quoted in WILLIAMSON, *Island Painter*, 1983, pp. 70-71.

THOMAS EAKINS, ROBERT HARRIS ET L'ART DE LÉON BONNAT

À la fin des années 1870, et au début des années 1880, plusieurs jeunes artistes canadiens allèrent à Philadelphie suivre les cours du peintre américain Thomas Eakins, à la Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. En retour, Eakins envoya quatre tableaux à une exposition organisée en 1885, à Toronto, par l'Ontario Society of Artists.

Chacune de ces oeuvres représentait une période particulière dans l'évolution de son art. Réunies, elles formaient un tableau saisissant de ses intérêts artistiques aussi bien que des étapes de sa carrière, et témoignaient de son estime pour les artistes canadiens de son temps. Deux scènes sportives *Base Ball Players Practising* et *Pushing for Rail*, toutes deux exécutées en 1875, avaient déjà été présentées dans diverses expositions aux Etats-Unis et en Europe. Un troisième tableau, *William Rush Carving his Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill*, une de ses oeuvres les plus importantes et les mieux connues, rappelle un épisode de la vie d'un de ses prédécesseurs à Philadelphie, le sculpteur William Rush. Ce tableau, dont l'idée lui était venue peu après qu'il eut commencé à enseigner à la Pennsylvania Academy, était, en quelque sorte, un manifeste de sa philosophie de l'enseignement de l'art et de son désir de solidarité entre les artistes d'Amérique du Nord.

La quatrième oeuvre présentée était un portrait intitulé *Elizabeth at the Piano*, peint à la manière du portraitiste français Léon Bonnat avec qui il avait étudié à Paris. Il se peut fort bien qu'Eakins ait envoyé ce tableau à Toronto dans l'intention précise de communiquer un message au peintre canadien Robert Harris. Ce dernier avait, lui aussi, étudié avec Bonnat. De plus, il avait été le maître de George Agnew Reid, artiste canadien qui s'était lié d'amitié avec Eakins pendant ses études à Philadelphie, et qui a fort bien pu inviter le peintre américain à présenter ses oeuvres à Toronto. Nous savons que Harris connaissait *Elizabeth at the Piano* car, un an plus tard, il reprenait, en l'adaptant, la composition d'Eakins dans son tableau bien connu *Harmony*. Consciente ou non, cette adaptation était une réponse appropriée au geste d'amitié de l'artiste américain.

Traduction: Élise Bonnette