

John Sloan's Prints

A Catalogue Raisonné of the Etchings, Lithographs, and Posters

By Peter Morse with a Foreword by Jacob Kainen

Publication Notice

Publication Date: March 1, 2001 - ISBN 1-55660-308-8 - 416 pages - \$175.00

Yale University Press published the first edition of this catalogue raisonné in 1969. This new edition adds details on the 1986 printings from 58 of the plates, which were overseen by the artist's widow.

This definitive catalogue contains reproductions of all the prints and posters (more than 330) with full descriptions of each, often with comments by Sloan himself. The Introduction furnishes additional information on medium, states, printing and printers, papers, inks, tissues, and signatures. The artist's widow Helen Farr Sloan has provided first hand recollections as well as copious records left by Sloan.

This full and accurate listing of all of the known prints, which includes a cross index of titles and a concordance of print numbers, has proven to be indispensable to art scholars, museums, libraries, collectors and print dealers.

From the foreword by Jacob Kainen:

The reputation John Sloan enjoys as a lively chronicler of city life has tended to make us forget that he was far more than an inspired reporter. Certainly his subjects represent a radical break with the genteel, academic tradition that dominated American art in the early years of the twentieth century, but the appropriateness of his formal expression must not be overlooked. Even in his raciest and most amusing subjects he was never a superficial realist. Sloan was always conscious of structure.

Up to the late 1920's, when Sloan began to stress form and to minimize subject, he was particularly interested in the give and take of everyday existence in a big-city environment. More than any other printmaker of the period, he was the champion of the common man and woman, seen sympathetically but without illusion in their least guarded moments. The makeshift character of life among the non-affluent, with their small pleasures, was his basic theme.

When Sloan began his *New York City Life* Set in 1905, he was already an accomplished etcher having produced 126 known etchings before beginning work on the prints in the Set, which would make his reputation.

Sloan built on the hearty Anglo-Saxon tradition of Hogarth, Leech, and Keene, which reflected his own heritage. The latter two artists probably appealed to him most directly, as his repeated acknowledgment of debt makes clear, but Sloan learned at least as much from the savage Hogarth. From him Sloan learned to pack his compositions with incident, to treat them fully in light and dark, and to make formal organizations. Hogarth was the outstanding example of the engraver who scorned clever technique and who built his tones through simple cross-hatching; and Sloan, while not as harsh and dry, no doubt found this uningratiating approach congenial to his own nature.

If we except older artists such as Joseph Pennell and Thomas Moran, there were no significant American etchers following Whistler's death in 1903. John Marin, working in the Whistler vein, was just beginning in 1906. Arthur B. Davies, who had made prints since the early 1880's, had not yet

found himself. Childe Hassam did not etch seriously until 1915. Thus Sloan, with his *New York City Life Set*, was the first important American etcher to reach maturity in the twentieth century.

The late Peter Morse was a curator of graphic arts at the Smithsonian Institution. Jacob Kainen was formerly curator of prints and drawings, National Collection of Art, Washington, D.C.

Published by ALAN WOFSY FINE ARTS

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