Joslyn Art Museum

WORKSHOP – Art Talk– Sentimental Journey: The Art of Alfred Jacob Miller

Presenter:


Sarah Burt was appointed Joslyn’s Richard and Mary Holland Curator of American Western Art and curator of American art in January 2008. In addition to her curatorial duties, she also provides oversight for the Margre H. Durham Center for Western Studies, the research institute of Joslyn Art Museum. Previously, Ms. Burt was the art history projects manager for the Georgia O’Keeffe Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the resident art historian for William R. Talbot Fine Art, a Santa Fe gallery specializing in the art and history of the Transmississippi West.

Workshop Objectives

- You will learn about Alfred Jacob Miller and his patron, Captain William Drummond Stewart.
- You will see how studying the Old Masters in Paris is reflected in his work.
- You will observe how Miller used his sketches to make oil paintings.
- You will realize how his understanding of the business world helped him be a successful artist.
- You will discover how Miller’s patrons influenced the artwork’s composition.

Alfred Jacob Miller

Miller was born on January 2, 1810 in Baltimore, Maryland and is best known for his artworks from the journey to the Rocky Mountains with Captain William Drummond Stewart. While living in Philadelphia from 1831 to 1832, Miller had the opportunity to study under artist Thomas Sully who was considered one of America’s best portraitists. In Paris, he studied Romanticism and that style was reflected in his sketches and paintings.

The year 1837 proved to be a significant turning point in Miller’s life. While attempting to make a successful career out of portraiture, he met Captain Stewart, a British Army officer and Scottish aristocrat, in April who in turn asked him to document a journey to the Rocky Mountains with him. After returning, Miller started creating oil paintings for his important patron, Stewart, and then Stewart invited Miller to come to his castle in Scotland to continue painting.

Miller returned to the states in 1842 to Baltimore and resumed his studio. He enjoyed a successful career creating western paintings based on the sketches from his one trip west. Due to poor health and lack of commissions, he retired in 1872. Miller never married and died on June 26, 1874.
Study how the Old Masters are reflected in Miller’s work:

Left. Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874), The Trapper’s Bride, 1850
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in., Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska

Right. Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874), Bartering for a Bride (The Trapper’s Bride), 1845, Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 in., Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis, Indiana

Raphael (1483-1520), Marriage of the Virgin, 1504
Oil on canvas, 67 x 45 1/2 in., Under license from the Italian Ministry for Cultural Goods and Activities

Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), The Judgement of Paris, 1639
Oil on canvas, 6 1/2 x 12 1/2 feet, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain