

JOSEPH PENNELL

ETCHINGS AND LITHOGRAPHS

The Dimock Gallery
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

SKYLINES

September 9 - October 10, 1975

america

INTRODUCTION

We have made a selection of etchings and lithographs on the basis of how they best reflect Joseph Pennell's fascination with the theme of industrial progress. His keen observation of the changing and expanding vistas of America's industrial corridors is a romantic vision, supported by his faith in technological progress. Pennell was also a historian; he preserved in his prints an image of the growing pains of America's cities. In the chaos of construction, he saw clarity, strength, and beauty.

The Pennell Collection was a gift to The George Washington University from Mrs. Richard Evans Norton of Philadelphia in 1954. A total of 64 works were received, including 50 etchings, 13 lithographs, and a pencil-watercolor sketch. Many of the framed prints have recently been returned from exhibition abroad through the Art in Embassies program of the U.S. State Department.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Francis S. Grubar for his original research on Pennell and his encouragement of my interest in Pennell's work in the past; special thanks are due Prof. Donald C. Kline for his continuing support and interest in The Dimock Gallery; we are appreciative of Mr. Zeki Findikoglu's fine silk-screened posters and to Mr. Jack Dorner for his technical assistance during the installation. The catalogue notes and supplementary exhibition materials were researched, written, and collected by Constance B. Colom, Assistant Curator of Art.

Lenore D. Miller
Curator of Art
The Dimock Gallery

JOSEPH PENNELL (1857-1926)

The half century marking Joseph Pennell's working period as a graphic artist saw America come of age in a modern sense. This was a vital period in American graphic expression; lithography had been introduced earlier in the century and etching was undergoing a revival with the founding of groups such as the New York Etching Club in 1877 and the Philadelphia Society of Etchers (first exhibition, 1882) of which Pennell served as Secretary. Some of America's most prominent printmakers, including James A. M. Whistler, Frank Duveneck, Otto Bacher, Henry Farrar, J. Alden Weir, Childe Hassam, Charles A. Platt, Stephen Parrish, Thomas, Peter and Mary Nimmo Moran, and Mary Cassatt were active at this time.

Pennell's position among this group is a highly respectable one; he was influenced earlier by Seymour Haden, and then became inspired by Whistler. His earlier style is characterized by a lyrical romantic realism. Later, particularly in his 20th century lithographs identified with industrial and urban America, his manner became broader and more sharply incisive. Construction and machines fascinated him. Writing in 1917 about his war lithographs, he said, "...it is the working of the great machinery in the great mills which I find so inspiring--so impressive--for the mills are the shrines of war..."

The University's permanent collection contains works by Joseph Pennell which span the years 1880 to 1923 and afford a fine opportunity to view the efforts of one of America's finest printmakers.

Francis S. Grubar
Art Department

INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES

Pennell was one of the first artists to interpret the power of America's great industrial architecture in the graphic medium. Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh were as inspiring in one way to him as were French or English cathedral towns in another. Moved by the grandeur of powerful steel mills and belching smoke stacks, he referred to them poetically as "Castles of Work" graced by "the dignity of usefulness". Bridges were one of his favorite subjects: "Here are not only the might and power of modernity, but wonderful compositions made by accident, one of the rare times when nature and man are compatible."

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| 1. The Eads Bridge, St. Louis | 1919 | etching |
| 2. Bridge Land, Chicago | 1919 | etching |
| 3. The Horseshoe Curve | 1919 | etching |
| 4. The Bridge at Hell Gate | 1915 | etching |
| 5. Art and Industry, Chicago | 1919 | etching |
| 6. The City Bridge, St. Louis | 1919 | etching |
| 7. The Riverside Station,
Pittsburgh | 1919 | etching |

NEW YORK

During his lifetime, Pennell completed two portfolios of etchings and one series of water-colors on New York City, yet he remarked that he had only skimmed the surface of the beauty of New York, "the most marvelous and endless subject on the face of the earth". For him the skyscraper was his "best beloved subject, either built or in the more picturesque stage of being built."

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| 8. St. Paul's, New York | 1915 | etching |
| 9. The Woolworth Building | 1915 | etching |
| 10. The Foundations at the
Cathedral, Saks Building | 1923 | etching |
| 11. New York from Governor's Island | 1915 | etching |
| 12. New York from Hamilton Ferry | 1915 | etching |
| 13. Not Naples, but New York | 1921 | etching |
| 14. Warship Coming In | 1921 | etching |
| 15. The City in 1915 | 1915 | etching |
| 16. New York from New Jersey | 1915 | etching |
| 17. Standard Oil, Staten Island | 1909 | etching |
| 18. The Cunard Building | 1921 | etching |

TERMINALS

Pennell saw the spacious and magnificently decorated railroad stations of New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. as "the greatest triumphs of modern American art". Marveling at the engineering skills and architectural designs which they embodied, he wrote, "These are the finest halls in the modern world. The meeting places of all America, here the nation gathers not to pray but to get information. Yet they are temples, Temples of Travel..."

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| 19. From the Station to the Hotel | 1919 | etching |
| 20. The Terminal, Weehawken | 1919 | etching |
| 21. Back from Atlantic City, Phila. | 1919 | etching |
| 22. The Waiting Room, Grand Central | 1919 | etching |
| 23. The Marble Hall, Pennsylvania
Station, N.Y. | 1919 | etching |
| 24. The Tracks, Grand Central, N.Y. | 1919 | etching |
| 25. The Facade, Union Station | 1919 | etching |
| 26. Flags Flying, Union Station | 1919 | etching |
| 27. The Clock, Grand Central, N.Y. | 1919 | etching |
| 28. Carriage Approach to Pennsyl-
vania Station, N.Y. | 1919 | etching |
| 29. The Hall of Iron, Pennsylvania
Station, N.Y. | 1919 | etching |
| 30. The Arcade, P.R.R., New York | 1919 | etching |
| 31. The Ticket Office, Penna. Sta. | 1919 | etching |
| 32. Within the Ferry, Cortlandt St. | 1919 | etching |

PHILADELPHIA

A native of Philadelphia, Pennell's first published prints were a series of etchings of the Old Germantown area, reproduced in the journal of the Pennsylvania Historical Society in 1880-1881 (see #33, #35, #37, and #38). Three decades later, after living abroad for many years, Pennell returned to Philadelphia and, rediscovering the city of his youth, made a series of lithographs of its historic landmarks which became the illustrations for Pictures of Philadelphia (see case).

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| 33. Old Stone Bridge at Nicetown | 1880 | etching |
| 34. Philadelphia from League
Island | 1919 | etching |
| 35. The Wister House | 1881 | etching |
| 36. St. Peter's from Pine Street | 1920 | etching |
| 37. Black Horse Inn Yard | 1880 | etching |
| 38. The Germantown Academy | 1880 | etching |
| 39. Hallway, at Dr. Wister's | 1912 | lithograph |
| 40. Liberty Bell | 1912 | lithograph |
| 41. Independence Square and
the State House | 1912 | lithograph |

Prints in the Cases:

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| 42. Wren's City | 1909 | mezzotint |
| 43. Old and New Mills,
Valenciennes, France | 1910 | etching |