

Art OF OUR TIME

SELECTIONS FROM THE | ULRICH MUSEUM OF ART
| WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Patricia McDonnell AND *Emily Stamey*

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

Toby Kamps, Laura Moriarty,

Antonya Nelson, Timothy R. Rodgers,

AND *Robert Silberman*

PHOTO-ESSAY BY *Larry Schwarm*

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ONE SETTING, TWO MOODS:

Winter was on its way. Only a few withered leaves clung to indifferent trees, and the stones beneath her feet felt slick with the cold rain that had fallen all morning. The sun was just now trying to come out, but from where she stood, it made little difference. The houses were gray, squat – the unrelenting wall of them blocking her view of the horizon. Only one door was left open. Peering in, she saw the bright square of a window on the other side.

“Sara.” Her mother said her name with no emotion, only fatigue in her voice. “You’re just standing there. And why would you wear your good coat for this? Come on now. We need your help.”

It was true. They did need her help, especially today, when you could feel the frost in the air, patient, waiting to attack when they were in their beds. But every day, there was work to do: something to be picked, pulled, or dug out of the patch of land behind the houses. They would have to get themselves through the cold season, with enough left over for the rent. Inside, it was washing, scrubbing, boiling, and canning. Always something. There was never time for her to read, to play, to sit on the front doorstep and think – not when even her grandmother, with her hurting hands, was bent over, working, her back rounded to the sky.

A crow looked down from a naked branch, eyeing her.

Her mother wore an orange rag on her head, a man’s shirt, and a skirt that had lost all trace of its original color.

Sara nodded to her, hurrying down the path. “Sorry,” she said. “I’m coming.”

OR:

There were still a few golden leaves on the trees, catching the light of the waning sun. The air felt clean the way cold air does. Sara was warm enough, the row of their neighbors’ houses acting as a shield from the wind. The sun had dried the rain from the night before off the stones beneath her feet, and she moved quickly down the path. All of this wetting and drying had been good for the garden: even in the bracing wind, it looked green and lush.

“Sara,” her mother said. “You don’t need to come help us today. You’ve had a long day at school. And you’re still wearing your good coat.”

It was true. It was her good coat, which her mother had made for her to wear to school. And though it was pretty, the color of a bright sky, it was tight across the chest. Wearing it, she couldn’t stretch her arms above her head.

She continued down the path until she was beside her mother. She looked up at her, waiting, her basket ready. The scarf around her mother’s head was the color of the sun, and her hands were brown with soil. Farther down the path, enormous heads of cabbage seemed to rise up into her grandmother’s quick hands. The old woman’s apron was bluer than Sara’s coat, and it had deep pockets into which she tucked whatever was ripe, the rewards of her knowing and her labor.

Laura Moriarty

The Ulrich’s collection includes more than three hundred works by Waugh.

5 *Peasant Landscape*

1883

Oil on canvas, 35³/₄ x 24 in.

Gift of Edwin A. Ulrich, 1974.0067.092



About the Contributors

Toby Kamps is senior curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. He has organized exhibitions on the work of Vanessa Beecroft, Ellsworth Kelly, and Claes Oldenburg as well as such themed exhibitions as *Small World: Dioramas in Contemporary Art* (2000), *Lateral Thinking: The Art of the 1990s* (2002), and *The Old, Weird America* (2008).

Patricia McDonnell is director of the Ulrich Museum of Art. Her scholarly focus is upon European and American modernism, and she is a leading specialist on the painter Marsden Hartley. Her publications include *Marsden Hartley: American Modern* (1997), *On the Edge of Your Seat: Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art* (2002), and *Painting Berlin Stories* (2003).

Laura Moriarty is the author of three novels and the recipient of several literary awards. Before becoming a full-time writer, she was a social worker. Moriarty lives in Lawrence, Kansas, where she teaches creative writing at the University of Kansas.

Antonya Nelson has written three novels and published six short-story collections. She contributes often to the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Book Review*. Nelson holds the Cullen Chair in Creative Writing at the University of Houston. Her award-winning novel, *Living to Tell* (2000), takes place in her hometown of Wichita, and her forthcoming novel, *Bound*, is set there as well.

Timothy R. Rodgers is director of the Scottsdale (Arizona) Museum of Contemporary Art. Formerly chief curator at the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, he is involved in a range of writing and curatorial projects. His scholarly concentration is on American early modernism.

Robert Silberman is an associate professor of art history at the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus. His chief scholarly interests have been photography, film, and contemporary art. Silberman collaborated with former *New York Times* photography critic Vicki Goldberg on the companion volume for the 1999 PBS series *American Photography: A Century of Images*.

Larry Schwarm is a professor of art at Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas, and a nationally regarded photographer whose work has been shown at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. His 2003 book, *On Fire: Larry Schwarm*, won the Honickman Book Award and Prize.

Emily Stamey, the Ulrich Museum's curator of modern and contemporary art, is the author of *Jolan Gross-Bettelheim: The American Prints* (2001) and *The Prints of Roger Shimomura: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1968–2005* (2006). Her scholarship centers on ethnic identities and social themes in American art.

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