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## To Look on Nature

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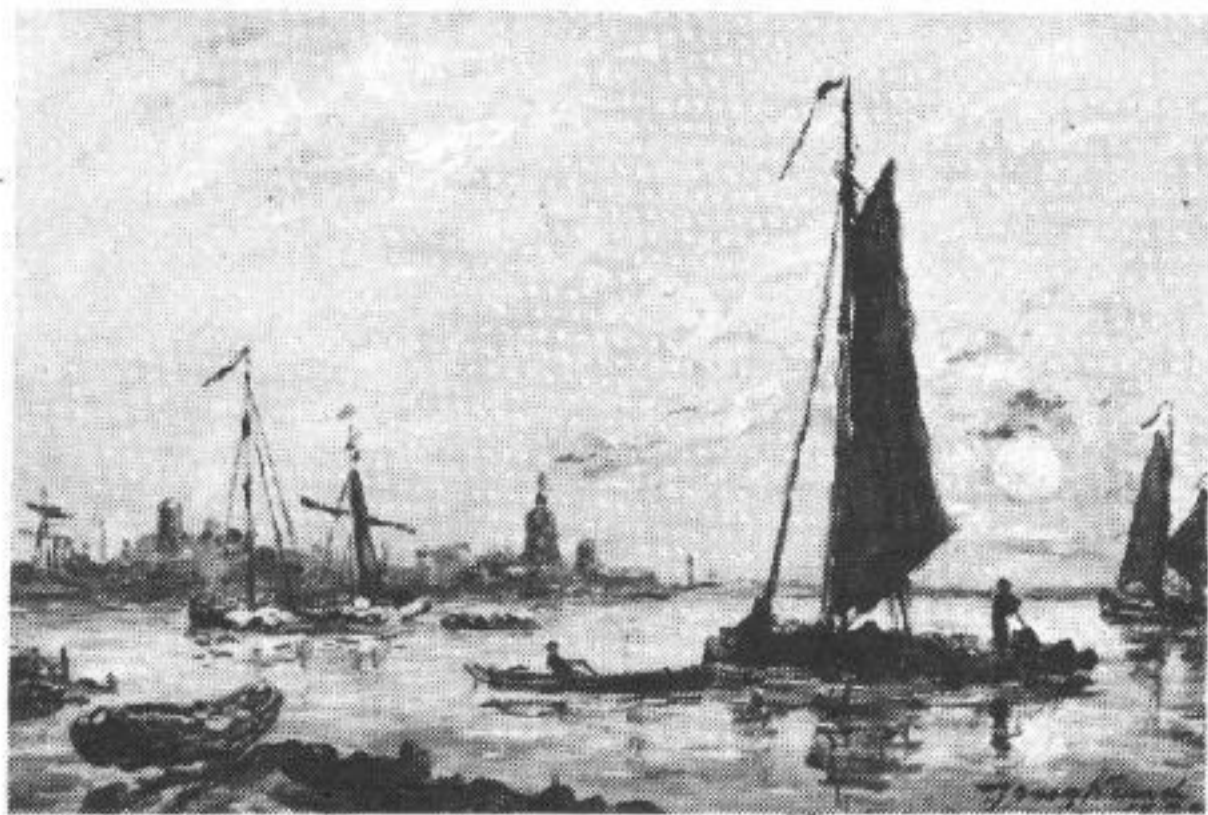
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## At The RISD Museum

# To Look On Nature



JOHAN JONGKIND: *La Meuse a Dordrecht, 1872*. Photo by Robert Fine.

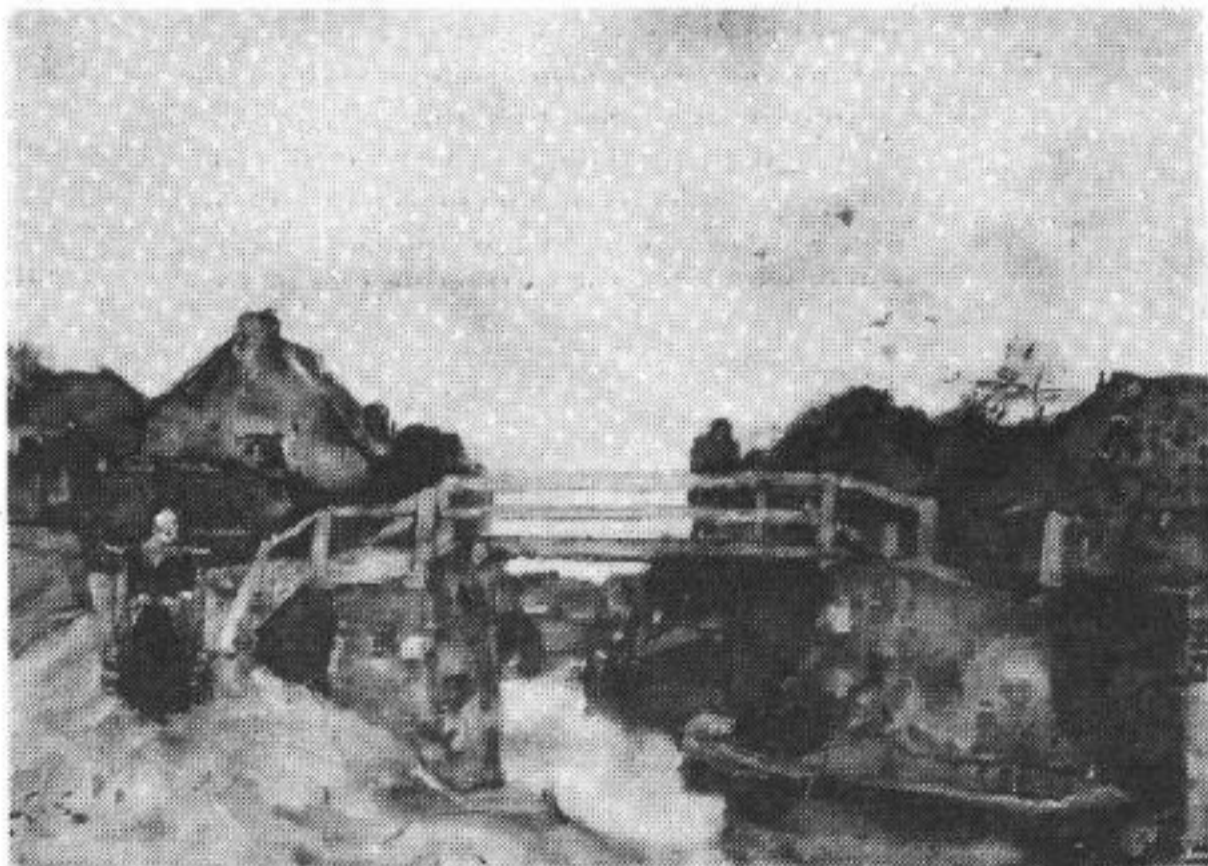
TO LOOK ON NATURE: EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN LANDSCAPE RISD Museum, Benefit Street

The present exhibition, *To Look on Nature: European and American Landscape 1800-1874* is the fifth in a series of annual exhibitions organized by the second year graduate students of the Brown Art Department in cooperation with the Museum of Art, R.I.S.D. This exhibition series is a central part of the graduate program in Art, giving the students concrete experience in connoisseurship, scholarship, and museum work in the context of constructing a loan show.

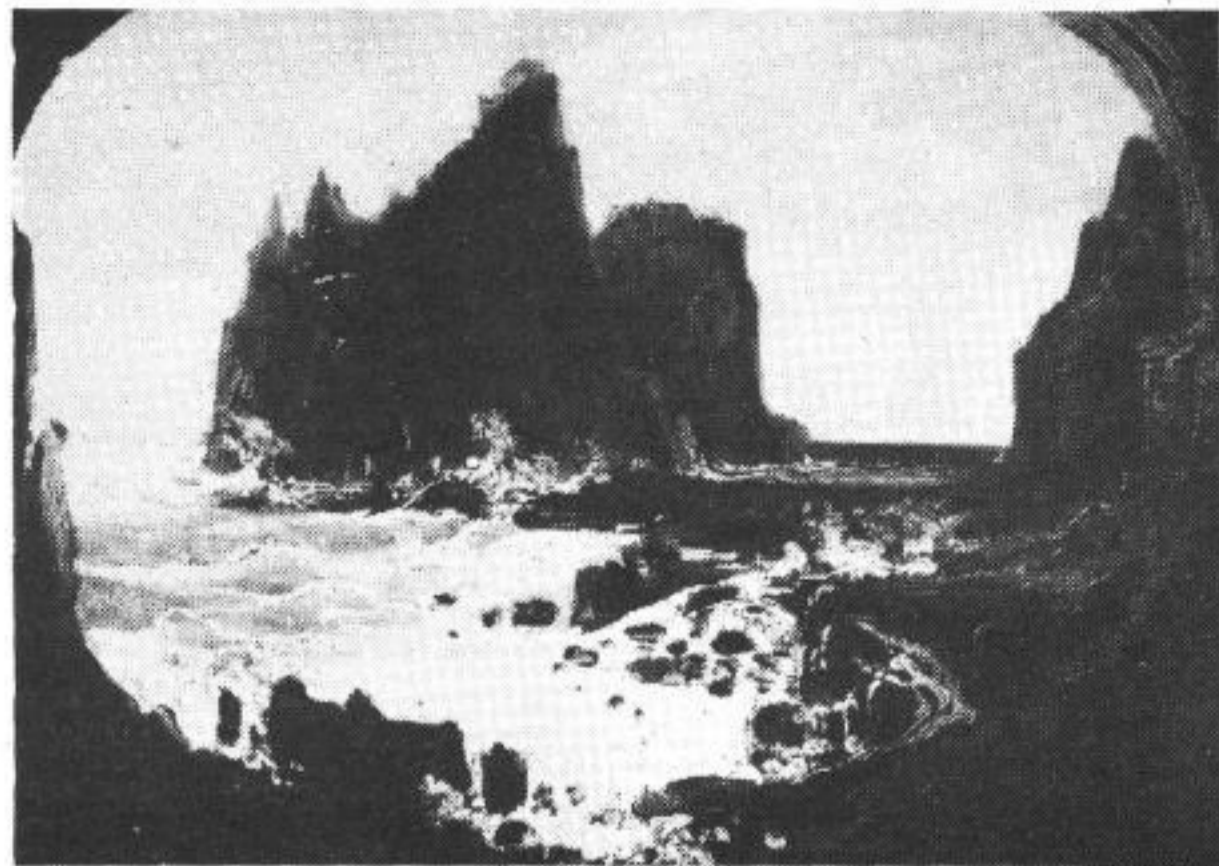
This year the exhibition provides a visual commentary on the

meaning and diversity of landscape painting in Western Europe and America in the nineteenth century. The show is highlighted by many popular painters who insure public interest: Constable, Corot, Courbet, Monet, and Renoir, to mention but a few.

Constable's *Dedham mill* (1810) testifies to the early impact of English landscape on later developments especially in France, as carried forward by the Barbizon painters in the Forests of Fontainebleau towards the middle of the century. The diversity of outlook within the Barbizon group itself becomes evident when comparing such paintings as Corot's *Morning Near Beauvais* (1860) with its tonal haze, Theodore Rousseau's *Woody Landscape* (ca. 1850-1860)



JACOB MANS: *Canal in Holland*. Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



WILHELM SCHIMER: *View of Capri as Seen through a Grotto, c. 1830*. Fine Art Photography by Nathan Rabin

with its copperish wiry shrubbery, and Daubigny's somber *Sunset* (1870).

The revolutionary impact of the Barbizon landscapists, so adequately represented in the exhibition, serves as a crucial perspective from which to understand the later developments of Courbet and the impressionists. Courbet's *Jura Landscape* (1869) evokes the sense of dark, moody forest hamlet while the much more airy approach of the impressionists can be seen in examples such as Monet's *La Promenade dans la Prairies a Argenteuil* (1873), Renoir's *Monet Painting in his Garden* (1873), and Pissarro's *Factory Near Pointoise* (1873). In these last paintings, one perceives the fully developed coloristic aesthetic of the impressionists as manifest in their dominant mode of expression—the landscape.

Perhaps the most interesting question raised by the show is what defines a landscape. Even a brief glance at the choice of paintings reveals that the landscape has been broadly defined. Included are cityscapes, such as Monet's *Village Street, Normandy* (1868) and seascapes, such as August Schirmer's *View of Capri* (ca. 1830). In most cases, the treatment of outdoor space, lighting and the relationship of figures to a setting relate the paintings thematically. Within this general framework, one can study a diversity of style, motif, composition, and aesthetic feeling.

One easily observable variation is the relationship of figures to the

setting. As an example of one extreme, the predominance of figures in Wilhelm von Kobell's *Man on Horseback* (ca. 1823) would seem to tenuously define it as landscape. However, in comparing the Kobell to other examples in which small figures are set within a predominating landscape, it seems that the figures and landscape are still dependent on one another. In the Kobell, the usual proportional relationship is reversed.

On the other hand, Mariano Fortuny's *A Street in Tangiers* (1869), does not seem to adhere to even such a broad definition of landscape. In this case, the figures are not a part of an outdoor setting; the city scene behind the figure group serves as a stage scenery backdrop. This prevents any feeling of landscape from developing as it does in the Kobell, or even the other cityscapes exhibited. In most cases, however, the choice of paintings are representative of the variety of approaches to landscape in the nineteenth century in a manner that avoids the formulation of artificially narrow definitions.

In fact, the wide range of approaches to landscape brings out the basic issues confronted by nineteenth century artists. The approaches vary as widely as John Martin's *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (ca. 1828), a fantasy of nature's overwhelming power; Johann Christian Reinhart's *Heroic Landscape* (ca. 1795-1800), a classically ordered idyll; Asher B. Durand's *Mount Chocorua, New Hampshire*, (1855), a patriotic tribute to the great American wilderness and John Ruskin's *View of Amalfi* (1840-1841), a poetic treatment of exotic geography.

The arrangement of the show raises issues such as cross currents of influence. French Barbizon paintings are hung with German and American paintings of similar persuasion. The impressionists share a room with Dutch paintings of the same time period which show a late response to general European trends. The hanging provides comparisons not brought out by the accompanying catalogue, which addresses itself to developments along national lines. The exhibition and the catalogue, prepared over the past year by the participating students, thus complement each other so that a deeper understanding of nineteenth century landscape emerges from studying both.

It is a rare opportunity to have such a thought-provoking and visually appealing exhibition in Providence, and a tribute to the cooperation of R.I.S.D. and Brown University. The nearly one hundred paintings by forty artists of seven nationalities will be on view until March 5 in the basement galleries of the Museum. It is a view of nature one should not miss.

George Gorse  
Claire Tyler

## Organic Restaurant

### Humble Pie

Humble Pie is a natural foods restaurant newly opened at 355 Hope Street, not far from Hope High school. A walk there from Brown is endurable, even on a snowy night, and Humble Pie is worth finding.

This restaurant is to most eating places as wood is to linoleum. It's a light, white-walled room with smooth wooden paneling, floor, and tables. Chopsticks and hand-lettered menus are in each booth. There is a large table where big groups can eat together.

The restaurant seems to have grown as organically as the food it serves. Nine young natives of Providence own and run it. They are inexperienced, but they are enjoying business, and feel that running a restaurant is "a good way to live in Providence."

Eating at Humble Pie is a little like being in someone's living room. A stereo sits in the corner with a stack of albums beside it. Little kids belonging to the restaurant toddle over to talk to you. Many of the people milling around in there turn out to be in charge. Someone sitting in another booth where people are talking and reading gets up to come over with a pencil and take your order. Different people serve you, whoever happens to be around when you need something.

Once you've ordered, food comes quickly to you through the open kitchen door. The

owners have some land and want to grow some of their own food when the season comes. Until then, everything is shipped from California. Organic food is usually expensive, but Humble Pie tries to keep prices down. Two dollars will buy a satisfying dinner.

The food is good, and will even fill up someone who eats hamburgers all the time and doesn't think much of vegetables. You don't have to be a food freak to like it, either. None of the dishes served are far-out enough to seem strange to a normal American appetite. The menu is fairly limited; one kind of soup, bean, and grain is prepared for the day. The grain is usually rice. A combination plate of grain, bean, vegetable, and salad is \$1.50. Yoghurt comes with all kinds of fixings and costs from \$.50 to \$.80. The sprout salad is excellent, and bread is home-made. Back in the kitchen a juice maker grinds up carrots and apples. The menu also includes tea, some fancy fruit drinks, a few sandwiches for \$.60 to \$.80, and some desserts. Loaves of bread and packaged natural food are sold at the counter. Hours are from twelve to ten.

Humble Pie is new and growing. The owners are ready to do anything with it. They would like to have music, meetings—whatever. It looks like Humble Pie could be more than just a special place to eat once and awhile.

-Didi Black