

CHILDE HASSAM





G. Caillebotte. Paris. 1874.



CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935)

Booksellers by the Seine

signed lower left, "Childe Hassam, Paris, 1888"

oil on canvas

28 1/2 x 19 1/4 in. (37 5/8 x 28 x 3 1/8 in.) 72.39

x 48.9 cm (95.57 x 71.12 x 7.94 cm) 1888

48059

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection, Philadelphia, since early 1920s

Private Collection, New York, 1997

Private Collection, Massachusetts

Private Collection

LITERATURE:

Hollis Taggart Gallery, *Recent Acquisitions Spring 1998*, New York, 1998, p. 42

Booksellers by the Seine (1888) emerges from a pivotal moment in Childe Hassam's early career, created during his period of study in Paris when he was absorbing the influence of the French Impressionists while already demonstrating the skill of an accomplished academic painter. In this finely observed scene along the banks of the Seine, Hassam turns his attention to everyday urban life, depicting Parisians as they browse the open air bookstalls that have lined the river for generations.

The painting reflects Hassam's gift for portraying people interacting naturally with their surroundings, a hallmark of his finest works. Here he captures not only the activity of the booksellers but also the shifting atmosphere of the city itself, conveyed through soft dabs of paint that suggest autumn leaves floating gently through the air and settling along the foreground. This delicate blending of human presence, weather, and light reveals Hassam's deep interest in the transient beauty of urban life and marks *Booksellers by the Seine* as an evocative example from an essential period in his artistic development.

ARTIST BIO:

Childe Hassam was born in 1859 in Boston. He was descended from a long line of New Englanders, and Nathaniel Hawthorne was a distant relative. Hassam was athletic and after dropping out of school at 17, he worked as a draftsman for wood engraving shop and attended art classes in his spare time.

In 1886, Hassam moved to Paris for three years where he shifted in style from his previously rain focused works to one more influenced by the French Impressionists. He even rented a studio in Montmartre that was previously occupied by Renoir and in the abandoned canvases, Hassam saw a kindred spirit.

"I looked at these experiments in pure color and saw it was what I was trying to do myself," Hassam remarked on these canvases.

Hassam found some success in Paris having shown in the Paris Salon in 1887. In 1889, Hassam and his wife returned to the U.S. He brought with him Impressionism that he applied to American life and scenes. Unlike the French Impressionists, Hassam showed life at its most light-filled and elegant as it was aimed at those who would and could buy his works. He treated his art as a business and created thousands of works in different mediums and showed in exhibitions everywhere.

His art of the 1890s and early 1900s was considered modern and radical for their use of light and color in contradiction to the still prevailing taste for works that looked like Old Masters. After the landmark 1913 Armory Show, Hassam's work would appear more traditional to the emerging trends. Nevertheless, after the end of WWI, Hassam's series of flagdraped streets and parades would become a breakthrough and are considered some of his most desirable works. Both a reflection of the mood of the time and Hassam's increasingly fervent nationalism, these paintings are reflective of his continued adherence to American Impressionism that fused both the style and techniques of French Impressionism with uniquely American subjects and scenes.

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Emile Bassam Paris LXX







