

The Magazine

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ANTIQUES



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Poetry and painting

Among this year's best surprises is the moving exhibition *Bold, Cautious, True: Walt Whitman and American Art of the Civil War Era*, which opened during the summer at the Dixon Gallery and Gardens in Memphis, Tennessee, and remains on view at the Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, New York, through January 24, 2010. Taking its title from a Whitman poem, the exhibition explores the American writer's poetry and prose to gain a deeper understanding of the transformation in the mood, the point of view, and the character of art produced in this country between 1861 and 1867.

The exhibition's curator, the director of the Dixon Gallery Kevin Sharp, uses the elegiac words of Whitman himself to introduce an impressive group of portraits, landscapes, battle-field scenes, and genre pictures by artists including Frederic Edwin Church, Sanford Robinson Gifford, Winslow Homer, and Eastman Johnson that depict the heroism of the common soldier, the flight of escaped slaves, and the courage of the women and children left behind. Whitman's 1859-1860 poem "Year of Meteors," for example, serves as the caption for Church's

The Meteor of 1860. Sharp explained, "Meteor showers were incredibly common in 1859 and especially in the summer of 1860 and everyone read it in the newspapers as a harbinger of things to come." As the nearly sixty works on view demonstrate, the poet and his contemporaries behind the easel were often engaged in similar themes.

The accompanying catalogue was written by Sharp and Adam M. Thomas.

***Bold, Cautious, True: Walt Whitman and American Art of the Civil War Era* · Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, New York · to January 24, 2010 · www.katonahmuseum.org**

The Letter by William Dickinson Washington (1833-1870), c. 1864. Oil on canvas, 29 3/4 by 33 1/4 inches. *Johnson Collection*.

