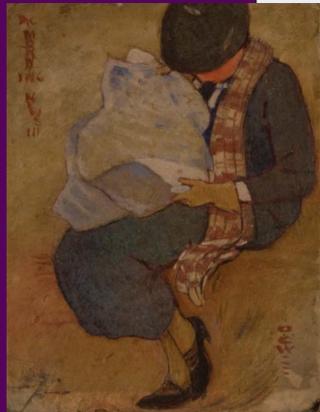


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professional disadvantages of her sex, may have discouraged Adeline from pursuing a larger career as a society portraitist. On occasion, the couple would collaborate on a single canvas, such as the domestic dual portrait *At the Table*, in which each artist painted the other.

Although the Wigands never rose to the first rank of American painters, their strengths are obvious. Adeline's mastery of portraiture, her elegance of line, and experiments with Tonalism and dramatic lighting effects merit reconsideration. The female figures in Adeline's atmospheric works like *Woman Reading a Letter* and the dazzling *Polly* (which latter points to unexplored skills as an *animalier*) create an interesting existential anxiety in some of her later paintings. Otto's work reflects little of the modernism of Paul Gauguin and the artists at Pont-Aven whom he worked alongside, but at his best, his skills as a draftsman and his impressionistic landscapes and genre scenes reveal a surety of touch and sincere charm that avoid cloying emotion. His views from the couple's Staten Island home are among his most arresting.



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Both Otto Charles Wigand and Adeline Albright Wigand have been described by living family members as modest, retiring and unwilling to thrust themselves forward into the limelight in order to seek fame. The circumstances surrounding the couple's decision to move to Staten Island near Otto's family in the years around World War I are unclear. Both artists were by then over the age of fifty and were facing an art world which had changed dramatically after the landmark Armory show of 1913, that signaled the final death knell of Academic painting, so the pleasant, comparatively quiet life on a then-rural Staten Island may have been appealing. Although both artists made interesting tentative steps towards more modern styles, their basic adherence to their traditional training meant that their work grew unfashionable over time.



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This exhibition, their first since the memorial exhibition held at the Museum in 1944, the year of the artists' deaths, is an opportunity to reevaluate their work. The Wigands' academic training reflected many of the highest ideals of art in the nineteenth century carried over into the twentieth. Those ideals lived on for a long while, nurtured in the hills of Staten Island.

-Bartholomew F. Bland
Guest Curator

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This exhibition features works from the Permanent Collection of the Staten Island Museum and loans from:

- Ms. Gwendolyn Bolling
- Ms. Helen Bolton
- Charlotte Durkee Maeck
- Mrs. George A. Forsythe
- Mrs. Tina Kaasmann-Dunn
- Mr. Richard Shannon
- Mr. Timothy Simonson
- Walter & Judith Wiedmann
- Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth D. Smith
- Dr. Jonathan D. Wall
- Mr. James R. Wigand
- Mr. John T. Wigand
- Ms. Marian Wigand
- Mr. Robert C. Wigand

Images

1. Adeline Albright Wigand
Portrait of My Mother,
c. 1890. Oil on canvas, 38 x 31 in.
Collection of the Staten Island Museum
2. Adeline Albright Wigand
Portrait of Otto Wigand,
c. 1895. Oil on artist board mounted on wood 11.25 x 9 in.
Collection of Robert C. Wigand
3. Adeline Albright Wigand
Portrait of a Young Girl.
Oil on canvas, 62 x 34 in.
Collection James R. Wigand
4. Adeline Albright Wigand
Portrait of Mademoiselle X
c. 1886. Oil on canvas, 21 x 19.25 in.
Collection of Timothy Simonson
5. Otto Charles Wigand
Untitled
c. 1925. Oil on canvas, 31.5 x 36.5 in.
Collection of Helen Bolton
6. Adeline Albright Wigand
Roses in Vase
c. 1925. Oil on canvas, 14.5 x 11.5 in.
Collection of Robert C. Wigand
7. Otto Charles Wigand
Still Life with Bowl
c. 1920. Oil on canvas, 23.5 x 26 in.
Collection of Robert C. Wigand
8. Otto Charles Wigand
Woman Sewing
c. 1888. Oil on canvas, 13.5 x 10.5 in.
Collection of Charlotte Maeck
9. Adeline and Otto Wigand
At the Table (The Wigands)
c. 1901-1910. Oil on canvas
21.5 x 22.25 in.
Collection of Robert C. Wigand

10. Otto Charles Wigand
The Morning News
n.d. Oil on board, 12.25 x 9.5 in.
Collection of Mrs. Tina Kaasmann-Dunn
 11. Adeline Albright Wigand
Polly
c. 1915-1920. Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in.
Collection of the Staten Island Museum
 12. Otto Charles Wigand
Untitled
c. 1904. Oil on canvas, 17.5 x 23.75 in.
Collection of Marion Wigand
 14. Otto Charles Wigand
Moon & Venus, 5am
c. 1930. Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 29.75 in.
Collection of Jonathan D. Wall
 13. Otto Charles Wigand
View of Stapleton
c. 1930. Oil on canvas, 19.75 x 23.75 in.
Collection of Kenneth Smith
 15. Adeline Albright Wigand
Portrait of Henry Julian Mullin
c. early 1880s. Oil on canvas 10.5 x 9 in.
Collection of the Staten Island Museum
- Cover: Adeline Albright Wigand
Woman Reading a Letter
c. 1910. Oil on canvas,
29.5 x 23.75 in.
Collection of Robert C. Wigand



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The exhibit and program are made possible, in part, by the following supporters:

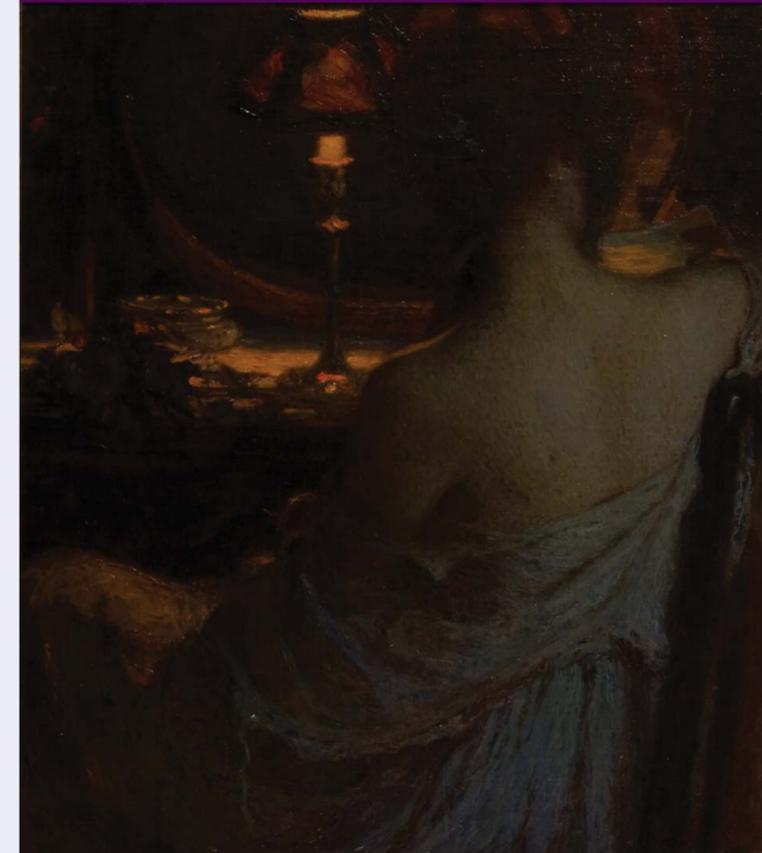
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Beauty Rediscovered:

Paintings by Adeline Albright Wigand & Otto Charles Wigand

June 24, 2010 - January 17, 2011



STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM
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Beauty Rediscovered: Paintings by Adeline Albright Wigand & Otto Charles Wigand

From the glorious nineteenth century landscape paintings of Hudson River School artist Jasper Cropsey, to the postmodern feminist sculptures of Louise Bourgeois, Staten Island has proven a conducive place for a wide array of artists for nearly two centuries. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Staten Island was a locale filled with idyllic vistas and breathtaking views, a rural refuge for New York artistic talent connected to, yet remote from, the creative turmoil of the rising Modernist era. The academically trained, Gilded Age painters Otto Charles Wigand and Adeline Albright Wigand are exemplars of this little known Staten Island artistic tradition. Frequently exhibited in their own day, when they experienced a fair degree of critical success, this remarkable artistic couple rapidly fell into near total obscurity in the greater art world after their deaths in 1944.

I still remember the first time I saw Adeline Wigand's *Portrait of My Mother*. In 1997 I was newly employed at the Staten Island Museum, eagerly exploring the storerooms, and charged with coming up with new exhibition ideas. Leaning deep into a shadowy painting bin, I was immediately struck by the canvas's soft tones, delicate brush strokes and wistful reverie. The painting brought to mind Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black: The Artist's Mother*, but was certainly a more empathetic, if not as daring, composition. Adeline Wigand was an artist who clearly had loved the old woman sitter. The painting was a valuable reminder that on occasion a talented, if little known, artist reaches to produce something wonderful.



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A quick trip to the files revealed that the painting had most recently been shown at the Smithsonian in an exhibition dedicated to works shown at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. I had never heard of the artist: Adeline Albright Wigand. Who was she? The Museum had a thin folder detailing the paintings by both Adeline and her husband Otto Charles Wigand in the Museum's permanent collection and a few scattered references to their work as part of the Staten Island Museum's bustling Art Section, a group of artists affiliated with the Museum in the early twentieth century. But standard indices of American Art History yielded little information about the couple's work other than brief mentions of venues where they had exhibited and the fact that they were well regarded "in their day". Soon, I was also examining Adeline's handsome portrait of Otto (this piece inspired by Whistler's painting of Thomas Carlyle), which fueled a desire to know more about the couple's relationship.

Unfortunately, biographical information about both artists remains frustratingly sparse. Few written documents from the artists testify to their working lives, but the broad outlines do form a picture. Adeline Albright was born in Madison, New Jersey in 1852, and raised in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Her family of moderately comfortable means sent her east to New York to study at Cooper Union in Manhattan, and later to Paris to study at the Académie Julian, a comparatively liberal institution known for its receptive attitudes towards female artists, where her teachers included the famous salon painter Adolphe-William Bouguereau. She exhibited at the Paris Salon and produced several noted pictures. In New York she studied with William Merritt Chase. Works depicting children like *Henry Julian Mullin* and *Portrait of A Young Girl* testify to Adeline's growing skills and her popularity as an artist during these years.

Otto Charles Wigand was born in New York City on June 8, 1856. While he was still a child, his family moved to Mt. Vernon, New York, where he attended school. Otto Charles was a second-generation immigrant of German ancestry, and he was fluent in German.

The American branch of the Wigand family also operated a publishing business, established by Otto Charles Wigand's father in New York in 1869. Otto Charles trained as a book-binder, and likely studied at Cooper Union, where he may have met Adeline. He also studied at the Art Students' League of New York. In 1884, he left for Paris to study at the Académie Julian and also studied with Gustave Boulanger and Jules-Joseph Lefebvre. While an art student in France, Otto spent memorable summers with other artists at the art colonies of Pont-Aven and Concarneau. Otto's varied output included stained glass, murals, bronze figurines, wood carvings, and experiments with photography. Having known each other for a number of years, Adeline Albright and Otto Wigand were finally married in November of 1890, after returning from Europe to New York.

Most American artists who traveled abroad to study in Paris, as the Wigands did, never achieved the renown of a James McNeill Whistler or a Mary Cassatt, and in that sense the Wigands are representative of this talented broader mass who studied and adapted the techniques and styles of their era, imbuing their works with their personal stamp



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as they became professional artists. The Wigands were among hundreds of eager Americans crowding the schools and salons of Paris in the 1880s, hoping to gain refinement in their skills and to exhibit at the salons that could help the artists make names for themselves when they returned to New York. While the Wigands were not stylistic groundbreakers, their canvases evince a high degree of beauty and skill that merit both deep contemplation and consideration.

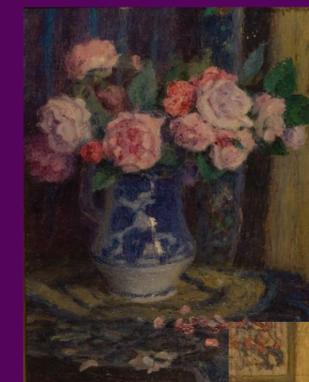
If the past is another country, the Wigands' work is imbued with clues to another era and to a way of thinking about art that can seem foreign to us now. Their paintings, filled with the qualities of charm, grace and modest elegance, depict a seemingly gentle world of small domestic moments, garden



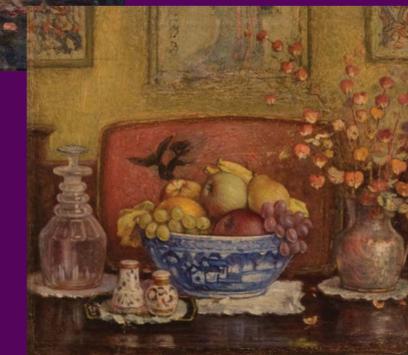
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pictures, contemplative portraits, ornamental still life, and highly romanticized peasants, a vision which did not hold a mirror to the societal growing pains of France or America at the turn of the twentieth century. Not until Otto Wigand's late paintings of the 1930s is New York City's presence as a modern metropolis finally seen in several sweeping compositions viewed from the windows of the couple's longtime home on Staten Island.

But although their art is representative of their era, their instinct personal artistic relationship places them decidedly outside the artistic mainstream. There are a few notable nineteenth-



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century artist married couples such as Frederick MacMonnies and Mary Fairchild, but such pairings are rare. The lack of any documented correspondence makes the quality of their relationship speculative, but they clearly worked comfortably together as artists for decades. Without children as they were, the nature and scope of both their artistic ambitions were large, though ultimately never fully realized. Both spent years of training in their craft (most notably at the Académie Julian in Paris), and lived as working artists in New York City both before and after their studies in Paris. Economic and familial difficulties may have eventually dampened their ambition, while the strain of providing a comfortable domestic life, as well as the



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