

CSF News

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Schmitt at the National Portrait Gallery

The Carl Schmitt Foundation has donated Schmitt's portrait of the poet Hart Crane to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. The portrait is unique as it is the only known oil painting of Crane done by an artist personally known to the poet. As part of the Gallery's permanent collection, the painting will receive excellent care and will be included in the Smithsonian's online database, thus making it—and Carl Schmitt—better known to scholars.

Hailed by critic Brom Weber as "unquestionably the major poetic talent of twentieth-century America," Crane was taken under Schmitt's wing upon his arrival in New York in 1916. Carl Schmitt's importance as a mentor in the early development of the groundbreaking Modernist poet "cannot be over-estimated," according to one biography of Crane. Watch for more about Carl Schmitt and Hart Crane in future issues. &

CARL SCHMITT'S ART "IN PERSON"

Over two dozen works by Carl Schmitt—paintings, pastels, etchings, drawings, and sculpture—are featured at an exhibition which opened November 12 in New Canaan, Connecticut. The New Canaan Historical Society is hosting the show as part of its series highlighting members of the Silvermine Group

of Artists. The exhibit also includes photos, exhibition catalogs, sketchbooks, and other items from the Foundation's archives illustrating Schmitt's long career and life as an artist.

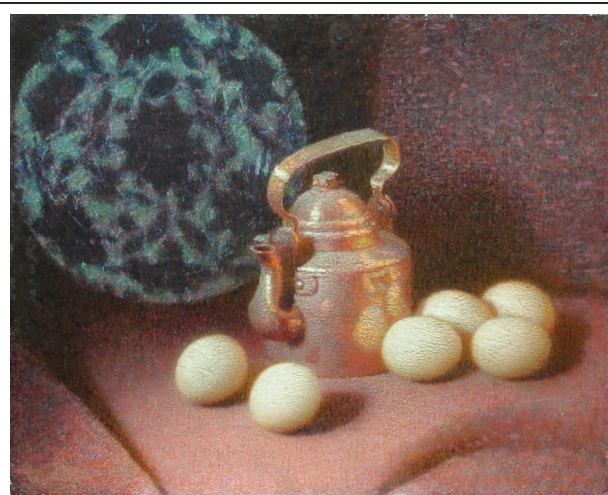
The wide scope of the exhibit is intended to give a broad overview of Schmitt's achievement in many different styles, all animated by his unique aesthetic vision. It also aims to present his life and work in the context of the artists' colony in Silvermine. It is a rare

opportunity to see many works loaned from private collections, most of which have not been exhibited in many decades and may not be so again.

We hope that this show will attract not only those who have not yet heard of Schmitt, but also those who may have known him or his work in the past but did not realize the scope and sig-

nificance of his life and work as a whole. To each and all we offer a warm invitation to come and see the art of Carl Schmitt "in person."

The New Canaan Historical Society is located at 13 Oenoke Ridge Road in New Canaan, Connecticut. For further information, you may call the Society at 203-966-1776, or visit their web page, www.nchistory.org. The exhibit runs through March 28, 2011. We would be delighted to see you there! &



I can conceive of no painting considered as fine-art which does not rely upon the beauty of light upon form.

Notebook 21 (1954)

The future does not lie with society, but with the family and the person.
And the personal will leads, because persons alone and not societies can experience humility.

Find me humble men and I will show you our rulers of the next centuries.

Men and families rather than nations will rule the future.

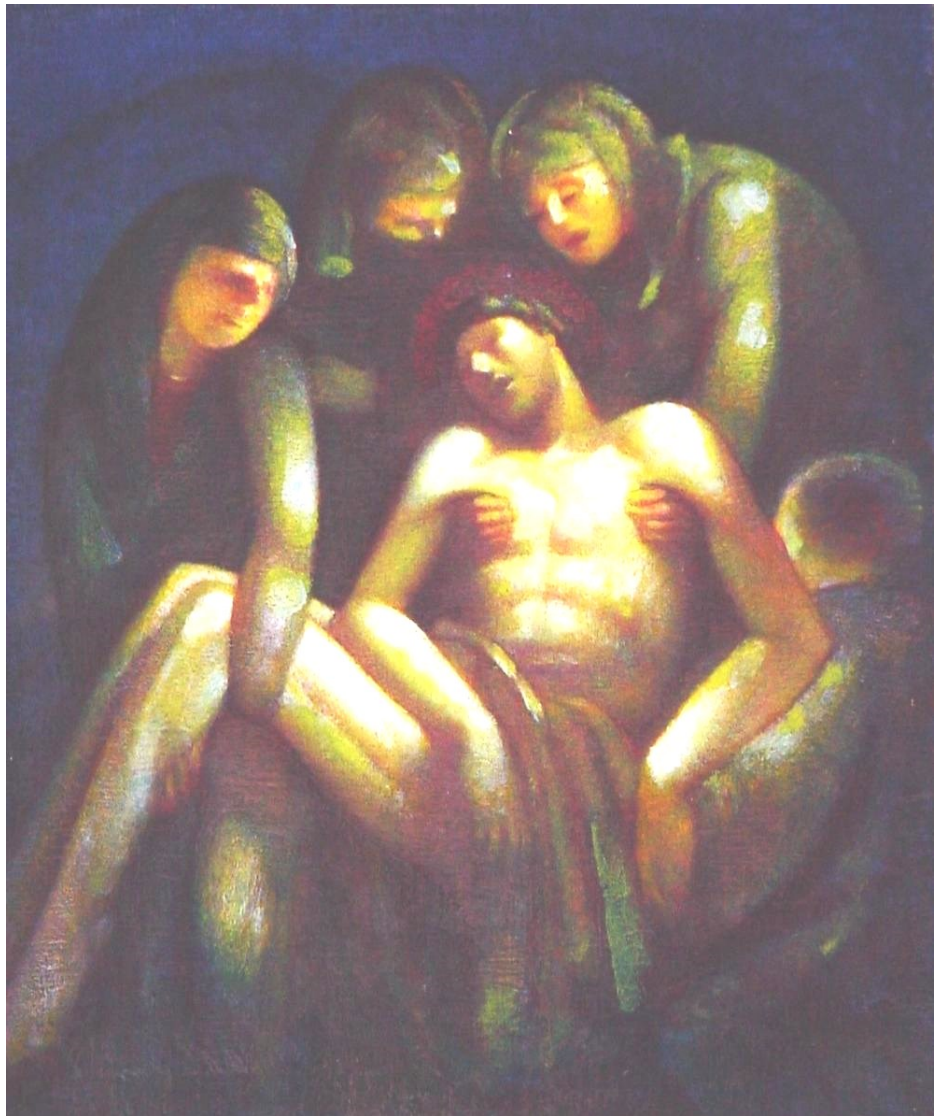
Carl Schmitt

FEATURED PAINTING: *DEPOSITION*

On the walls of my home I have a collection of fine works by Carl Schmitt, including two religious paintings. It is one of these that I am proudest to own, to sit before and to think about. It depicts the deposition of Christ, the taking down of his dead body from the cross. Let me tell you some of the things I have delightfully discovered about the composition of this painting and how light reveals the values of the objects in the painting.

At first glance, the arrangement of the composition is circular or, as the artist would put it, *lyrical*. The huddled figures at the top with their supporting arms, the legs of the body, and the humble figure at the lower right constitute the principal shape of the painting. Looking more closely, we see vertical structural elements, the hallmark of the *epic*: the arms gently but firmly supporting the weight of the dead body. Finally, the angular forms in the *contraposto* of the body and the turn of the head, arms, and legs of Christ reveal *dynamic* or *dramatic* elements. Thus both the lyrical and epic elements draw the eye to focus on the dramatic figure in the center. The abstract and universal forms embedded in nature—the lyric, epic, and dramatic—are here brilliantly interwoven in a simple unity of mature and masterful composition.

Along with the composition, the artist's use of light to reveal form draws us into the contemplation of the reality before us. It is light and dark which reveal all form. The artist has delineated the form not only through his simple palette of the



three primary colors but also the values of light and dark, most evident in the effulgence of light. This light is truly mysterious. Does it emanate from an unseen source outside the painting, or does it flow out from the sacred body itself?

Once again we are confronted with the mystery of the central figure in the painting. And yet this aesthetically dynamic figure is a dead body! Although surrounded by darkness, it seems to glow with a light beyond the power of nature. As inspiring as the presence of light is in the painting, finally it is through the selective *lack of light*—what the artist called

voids—that, paradoxically, reality is revealed for what it truly is. Like the irony of the drama of the *dead* body at the center of the painting, the voids—the absence of light—serve an “ironic” or paradoxical function highlighting the significance of what is being depicted.

Thus this masterpiece allows us to glimpse what the physical eye alone is unable to perceive. We realize something of the Grand Reality bodied forth in delightful contemplation of natural reason, faith, hope, and charity: the reality of the Incarnation in truth is represented.
—Allen Squires

The appreciation and creation of beauty cannot be stopped, once spirituality is experienced . . . for beauty is a necessity to deep religious experience.

Finding Joy in the Pursuit of Beauty

Once asked my father what that “allegorical figure with a rose” was. His answer: “Just look at it.” He never explained his paintings: he wanted others simply to enjoy them, to look with their own eyes.

The holy figure on the left was clear. And since my father often coupled the pursuit of the good with the pursuit of beauty, I thought the mysterious figure on the right might stand for beauty, or possibly the arts.

It was only many years later that my father said something that showed me there is far more to this painting. “There are two things you don’t fully realize until you’re eighty. The first is how beautiful everything is, and the second is how passing it all is—all just nothing.” Instead of facile explanations, his words put before me the mystery of beauty. That’s what he wanted us to see and to enjoy.

While we may not be artists, beauty is not foreign to us. We are all drawn to beauty of a rose and pause to enjoy a rainbow or a sunset. And when our attraction to someone or something beautiful turns to *love*, our love increases as we get to *know* that person or thing better, and we *enjoy* that, too. Beauty is our birthright.

Enjoyment connects beauty with the good, and it increases as we get to know the truth of things. Enjoyment always accompanies our growth in the knowledge and love of that which is truly good: to see more deeply into reality in this way is to enjoy it—and experience it as beautiful.

It is the good, the true and the beautiful that connect the two figures in this painting. The saint on the left, pursuing the good, is inseparable from the figure that rep-



Carl Schmitt, *St. Paul the Hermit and Allegorical Figure with a Rose*, 1922.

resents the mystery of beauty. Truth, goodness and enjoyment of beauty are something we all experience in life itself.

But life is not simply the enjoyment of all that is good and true and beautiful, and here is where that “everything is passing” comes in. It refers to all the negatives in life that stem from our limitations and mistakes—as well as those of others. My father saw all of these “non-goods” in terms of the great good of life itself. It is in all the fears, setbacks, and darkness that the true greatness of life is revealed. These are the shadows and the voids my father combined with the brightly lit lyric forms to make his art real—and hence beautiful.

In this way, he shows that each of us can find a measure of joy, peace, and beauty by pausing long enough to see our own struggles in the light of the great goodness of life itself. This is the real work that redeems life of its momentary anxieties and troubles. And as my father reminds us, *that* takes a lifetime. —Carl B. Schmitt, Jr.

REMINISCENCES

Louise Schmitt, the wife of Carl Schmitt's seventh son John, writes of her early memories of her father-in-law, known to her family as “Granddad.”

Granddad was quiet until he found a subject that interested him. When he did speak, his composure and his thoughts about real things meant that we listened. At times he was lighthearted. He took pleasure in playing with words and especially enjoyed inventing pun names.

I loved being with him because he honored me by speaking of art or of episodes in his life. It was a source of joy for me and our young family to be included in the deep happiness of a long and fruitful marriage.

I could see in Granddad a life full of faith, a faith that was required in his life as a painter raising ten children without a regular paying job. That was heroic. But what I saw was how simply he lived his dependence on God's providence. He had little fame, no self-importance, but he knew that his life work was to use his gifts to bring beauty into the world. ♪

Comfortably off and cosmopolite [critics] tell me that it is fatal for me to live alone in the woods and paint, that I must not separate myself from humanity, reality. . . .

Humanity?

Is there anything more human than one's own children?

Reality?

Is there anything more real than poverty with a family?

except death, which is also tasted each day?

Notebook 2-X (1931)

Supporting the Carl Schmitt Foundation

The Carl Schmitt Foundation was established in 1996 to perpetuate the appreciation of the American artist Carl Schmitt (1889-1989). It seeks to make better known Schmitt's achievements as an outstanding man, an extraordinary fine artist, and profound thinker on aesthetics and life.

Right now we are poised to push ahead with numerous important projects but we still need your help, especially to preserve and restore many paintings in urgent need of proper care. Other long-range projects await your generous support.

Many thanks to all who have already responded to this campaign so generously. If you have not yet given, please consider making an ongoing pledge to the Carl Schmitt Foundation. Even a modest monthly commitment tells us that you believe our mission is worth supporting. It is affordable for you, yet can prove a significant help for us over the course of the year.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send your tax-deductible donation by check or to indicate your pledge amount. You may also donate online through Paypal at carlschmitt.org.
∞ Thank you!



Schmitt painting *en plein air*, c. 1920

*Man cannot long remain interested in things only.
When he searches for greater happiness he searches for
the reality behind things—he finds God.*

*When he finds God he is said to be mystical because
he has found a Mystery, the essence of happiness,
a Triunity, the Trinity.*

*When man finds the Reality of the universe he suddenly sees
all things— the natural order, creation—as symbols.
And when he sees symbols he is a “creator” or artist.*

Notebook 2 (1925)

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