

SPOTLIGHT: Arthur Wesley Dow
Title of Piece: The Tidal Empire



El Presenter: Mary Alice Dwyer

Date: May 5, 2009

Title of Piece: The Tidal Empire (Ipswich Marshes)

Year created: 1917

Artist: Arthur Wesley Dow (1857 – 1922)

Five points of interest about this artist:

1. Dow was among the first great influences for modern design in this country. Studied in Boston, Paris; painted en plein air in Brittany.
2. Influenced by a sketchbook of Hokusai "Hokusai gave me more light on composition and decorating effect than years of study of pictures." He focused on a new aesthetic approach to art and design.
3. Wrote that line, notan (Japanese word for the balance of dark and light) and color as the trinity of power.

4. He held that art was construction, not imitation – a departure from current methods.
5. Published Composition in 1899, while on the creative faculty of art and design. “The first step, wrote Dow, is the drawing of lines as the boundaries of shape.” The exercises started with the simplest line arrangements and proceeded toward the more complex arrangements of line and notan.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. What do you see here? What else can you find?
2. How would you describe the lines, shapes you see? The colors?
3. How is this similar or different from the last painting we looked at? Imagine each artist in his own studio using different brush strokes.
4. How do you think this artist felt about nature?
5. Would you like to have this in your house? Why? Why not?

Tour Type: Learning to Look

JSMA Collection:

<https://jsmacollection.uoregon.edu/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=5288;type=101>