

Margaret J. Patterson:
Master of Color
and Design

Cahoon Museum of American Art
October 3 through November 12, 2006



Interior of a Workshop, gouache over charcoal on brown paper, 7 x 10 inches; collection of Hemak Ramsay



Bonny Doon, watercolor and gouache on brown paper, 11 x 15 inches; private collection

Margaret J. Patterson: Master of Color and Design

Glorious use of color and exquisite sense of design are the cornerstones of the landscapes and floral still lifes Margaret Jordan Patterson produced during the first half of the 20th century. In virtually all of her pieces there is something that delights the eye – something only incidentally related to the subject.

Her contemporaries recognized her talent as a painter and considered her a pioneer in color woodblock printmaking here in this country. She enjoyed regular exhibitions and glowing reviews in her hometown of Boston and participated in shows in many other cities in the United States and Europe. In 1933, she took part in the "American Color Prints" exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. It was a large show, bringing together etchings, woodcuts and lithographs by such well-known artists as John Taylor Arms, Gustave Baumann, Arthur B. Davies, Rockwell Kent, Karl Knaths, Blanche Lazzell, Abraham Walkowitz and Max Weber. At the time she died in 1950, her work was in numerous public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Her parents, Alfred Patterson of Saco, Maine, and Sarah Frances

Jordan of nearby Portland were married in 1864. Their fathers were sea captains, and Alfred, too, had taken up the seafaring life. In 1867, Sarah was at sea



Margaret J. Patterson (1867-1950)



Twilight (aka Early Evening), 1907, pastel and watercolor on paper, 12 x 10 inches; collection of James R. Bakker

with him when she went into labor. They stopped at the Indonesian island of Java, where Margaret was born at a hotel in Soerabaija. As they sailed home, Sarah fought off a fever, then the ship went through a hurricane and sprang a leak. In his journal Captain Patterson called it "one of the most anxious passages I have ever experienced."

Details of Margaret Patterson's early years are sketchy, but she apparently accompanied her father and a grandfather on other voyages, developing a life-long love of the sea and travel. She attended high school in Boston and Saco and, in 1895, entered Pratt Institute in Brooklyn on scholarship. But she left after only a year.

Most of Patterson's artistic training seems to have come from friendships and short-term studies with other artists. She always gave special credit to Arthur Wesley Dow (1857-1922) and Charles H. Woodbury (1864-1940), who were among the most influential teachers of their time. A driving force of the Arts and Crafts movement, Dow was one of the first Americans to enthuse over Japanese woodblock prints. Patterson surely knew his popular 1899 instruction manual, "Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use



River and Clouds, watercolor over charcoal on cream paper, 15 1/4 x 18 3/4 inches; collection of Remak Ramsay



Summer Clouds, color woodblock print on Japanese paper, 9 x 10 3/8 inches; collection of Remak Ramsay

of Students and Teachers." Patterson also became friends with Woodbury, who taught thousands of artists at his summer school in Ogunquit, Maine. He admonished students to "paint in verbs, not in nouns." Dow no doubt sharpened Patterson's sense of design while Woodbury fostered her lively brushwork.

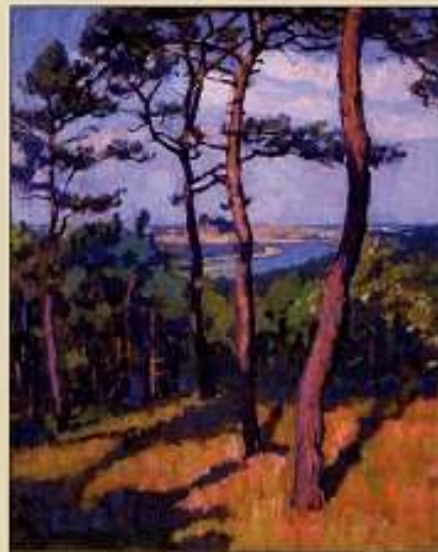
Like so many unmarried professional women artists of her time, Patterson had a dual career as a teacher. She initially taught art in public schools for 17 years – probably in Boston from 1898 to 1910. Then, she became head of the art department at Dana Hall in Wellesley – a prep school for girls that stressed the equality of women and individual development. It would appear Patterson really loved teaching, that it wasn't just an economic necessity. Even after her retirement in 1940 – at age 72 – she offered a class in landscape painting at her studio on Monhegan Island in Maine for three summers.

Patterson dated her works only sporadically, and her style didn't change dramatically over 50 years, except to grow more daringly colorful and boldly designed. But it's often possible to date her pieces in a general way by observing the subject matter. She generally traveled during

her summer vacations, beginning with her first trip to Europe in 1899, and works in her exhibitions often reflected where she'd been



Cape Cod Hills, oil on canvas board, 12 x 15 inches; private collection



Salt Creek, c. 1915-1920, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 inches; courtesy of Diamond Antiques & Fine Arts, West Harwich

the previous year.

Before World War I, she mostly visited northern Europe, including Holland, Belgium, France and Germany. She was attracted by windmills, village streets, picturesque buildings, and views over rivers and harbors. Her palette was relatively tame at that point, but she still found ways to make the most of color combinations and design possibilities.

By 1909, she'd discovered Spain and Boston art critics discovered just what an exciting colorist she could be. The review of her 1910 show at the Copley Gallery raves: "There can be no doubt that the painter had a good time in Spain. ... There is color of the most extraordinary force in these watercolors. ... It is, one may say, an orgie [sic] of color. The painter could not but let herself go; and her enthusiasm is contagious."

Around the same time, Patterson learned how to make color woodblock prints during a summer in Paris, probably from the American expatriate artist Ethel Mars. Her exceptional grasp of the medium's potential was quickly matched by the public's appreciation of her talent. By 1913, she had made enough prints to exhibit them in Paris, where Japanese



Bleeding Heart, color woodblock print on paper, 9 3/4 x 14 1/16 inches; collection of Remak Ramsay



White Dogwood, color woodblock print on paper, 9 3/4 x 14 1/16 inches; collection of Remak Ramsay

woodblock prints had been so admired by the French Impressionists. In 1914, she introduced them at galleries in Boston and New York. Then, in 1915, Worcester Art Museum presented a solo show of her prints, and Patterson received honorable mention for her entries at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

During World War I, when she couldn't sail for Europe, Patterson traveled around New England, particularly to Cape Cod and Monhegan. She produced an impressive body of work inspired by the Cape, where she gravitated to the area between Chatham and Truro rather than the artists' colony of Provincetown. Meandering saltwater inlets, windblown trees, and rolling moors and dunes lent themselves to her talent for finding striking patterns in the interplay of simple shapes.

In 1918, Patterson and five other Boston women artists who were breaking with an academic style (including Laura Coombs Hills, Jane Peterson and Mary Bradish Titcomb) exhibited together at Doll & Richards Gallery as "The Group." They probably envisioned themselves as the female counterparts of the Ten American Painters. Their work toured the country, with stops including Worcester Art Museum, Detroit Art

Museum and Cleveland Museum of Art.

After World War I, Patterson most frequently summered in Italy. In 1926, a critic wrote: "Her work



Villa on a Waterway, c. 1910s-1930s, oil on canvas, 18 x 15 inches; courtesy of Spanierman Gallery



The Old Pergola, gouache and charcoal on gray paper, 10 x 14 inches; private collection

now assumes somewhat the aspect of ultra-modernism." Two years later, she exhibited scenes of the islands of Sardinia and Capri and of the Alps near the seaport of Genoa. "Color floods the gallery," reads one review, adding that Patterson "extracted drama and effective composition from every-day Old World scenes."

Patterson didn't do many woodblock prints of Italy, probably because she found a new motif in which to blossom: flowers. "Water Lily," which she exhibited at the Boston Art Club in 1920, seems to have been her first floral. Color woodblock prints of roses, daisies, zinnias, marigolds, poppies, pansies, hollyhocks, petunias, anemones and mixed bouquets brought out the very best in her skills as a colorist and designer.

Patterson's paintings and color woodblock prints grew to resemble each other. In her paintings, the artist tended to flatten spatial relationships and omit transitional tones. In her prints, she achieved tonal subtleties that would make many painters proud. Amazingly, she also managed to convey the impression of freedom and spontaneity in an art form that's hard, rigid and demands precision.

Patterson died on Feb. 17, 1950. She was buried in the family plot at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Saco.

✿ Exhibition Checklist ✿

Anemones

Color woodblock print on paper
10 1/8 x 7 1/4 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Belvedere Garden

Gouache over charcoal on gray paper
15 x 18 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Birch Trees

Watercolor and gouache on brown paper
14 x 10 inches
Private collection

Bleeding Heart

Color woodblock print on paper
9 3/4 x 14 1/16 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Bonny Doon

Watercolor and gouache on brown paper
11 x 15 inches
Private collection

Cape Cod Hills

Oil on canvas board
12 x 15 inches
Private collection

Cape Cod Inlet

Gouache and charcoal on paper
6 7/8 x 10 inches
Private collection

Cape Cod Landscape c. 1915

Watercolor and gouache on paper
15 x 18 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

Cape Cod Landscape

Watercolor on paper
15 x 18 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Capri

Watercolor on paper
7 x 10 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

Coast Cedars

Color woodblock print on paper
7 3/8 x 10 3/8 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Woodblocks for **Coast Cedars**

Fruitwood
7 3/8 x 11 3/8 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

Dutch Canal (with two photographs of Sluis, Holland)

Woodblock print on paper
7 x 5 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker



Cape Cod Landscape, c. 1915, watercolor and gouache on paper, 15 x 18 inches; courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Evening Arrival c. 1910s-1930

Oil on canvas
15 x 18 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Flanders Poppies

Color woodblock print on paper
7 x 10 inches
Private collection

Floral Arrangement

Oil on canvas
18 x 15 inches
Private collection

Heartsease

Color woodblock print on paper
7 1/4 x 10 1/4 inches
Private collection

Hollyhocks

Color woodblock print on paper
10 15/16 x 7 5/8 inches
Collection of Kohar and Michael Allen

In the High Hills

Color woodblock print on paper
11 1/4 x 8 7/8 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida



Land's End, Monhegan, c. 1910s-1920s, watercolor on paper, 15 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches; courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Interior of a Workshop

Gouache over charcoal on brown paper
7 x 10 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Ischia

Gouache on paper
7 x 10 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

Italian Mountain View with Tree Study c. 1910s-1930

Watercolor on paper
9 3/4 x 13 3/8 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Italian Mountainside

Watercolor on paper
12 x 14 inches
Courtesy of Lepore Fine Arts, Newburyport

Land's End Study, Monhegan c. 1910s-1920s

Watercolor on paper
15 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Lone Tree, Cape Cod

Gouache and charcoal on paper
17 1/2 x 14 1/2 inches
Private collection

Main Street, Nantucket

Color woodblock print on paper
7 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Steven Thomas Inc., Woodstock, Vermont

Monhegan

Watercolor on paper
14 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

Morning Glories

Color woodblock print on paper
9 7/8 x 7 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Mother, Adam Empey and Margaret Patterson on Way to Coney Island Beach 1899

Ink wash on paper
10 x 7 1/4 inches (sight)
Collection of Russell Bigelow

Mountain View 1928

Gouache on paper
9 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Old Fish House, Monhegan

Color woodblock print on paper
7 1/8 x 10 3/8 inches
Courtesy of Steven Thomas Inc., Woodstock, Vermont

The Old Pergola

Gouache and charcoal on gray paper
10 x 14 inches
Private collection

Old Villa in the Mountains

Watercolor with charcoal on paper
10 x 14 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

The Pergola 1915

Gouache on brown paper
17 1/2 x 14 7/8 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Petunias

Color woodblock print on paper
8 5/8 x 12 1/8 inches
Collection of Russell Bigelow

Piccola Marina, Capri c. 1920s

Woodblock print on paper
7 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches
Private collection

Private Garden, Ravello, Italy, Overlooking the Mediterranean

Watercolor with graphite on paper
15 x 18 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

River and Clouds 1918

Watercolor over charcoal on paper
15 1/4 x 18 3/4 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Salt Creek c. 1915-1920

Oil on canvas
24 x 20 inches
Courtesy of Diamond Antiques & Fine Arts, West Harwich

Salt Creek, Cape Cod

c. 1915-1920
Color woodblock print on paper
9 x 7 1/8 inches
Courtesy of Diamond Antiques & Fine Arts, West Harwich

Spanish Harbor Town

Gouache and charcoal on paper
13 x 18 inches
Private collection

Spring Flowers

Color woodblock print on paper
7 x 10 inches
Courtesy of Diamond Antiques & Fine Arts, West Harwich

Spring in Italy

Color woodblock print on paper
9 x 11 1/2 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Still Life with Fruit and Blue Bottle

Oil on canvas
18 x 15 inches
Private collection

Still Life with Pitcher

Watercolor and gouache on paper
14 x 17 inches (sight)
Collection of James R. Bakker



View of Mountains with Cypress Trees, c. 1920s, gouache on paper, 10 x 13 1/2 inches; courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Street Scene, Ypres c. 1900-1910

Watercolor and gouache on paper
17 1/2 x 13 3/4 inches
Private collection

Student Exercise #39

Ink on thin tissue paper mounted on Japanese paper
6 5/8 x 3 3/4 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

Summer Clouds

Color woodblock print on Japanese paper
8 7/8 x 11 1/4 inches (image)
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Study for Summer Clouds

Pen and ink on paper
8 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Sunlit Woods

Watercolor on paper
10 x 14 inches
Private collection

The Swan

Color woodblock print on paper
9 1/8 x 6 3/4 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Swans

Color woodblock print on paper
7 1/8 x 10 1/4 inches
Private collection

Torcello

Color woodblock print on paper
10 x 7 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Twilight (aka Early Evening) 1907

Pastel and watercolor on paper
12 x 10 inches
Collection of James R. Bakker

View of Mountains with Cypress Trees c. 1920s

Gouache on paper
10 x 13 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York



Coast Cedars, color woodblock print on paper, 7 3/8 x 10 3/8 inches; collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Vignole from a Gondola

Color woodblock print on paper
10 x 7 inches (image)
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Villa on a Waterway c. 1910-1930s

Oil on canvas
18 x 15 inches
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York

Village of Vilnitz, Rugen 1911

Color woodblock print on paper
7 7/16 x 10 7/8 inches
Collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida

The Watertily

Color woodblock print on paper
10 1/4 x 7 3/8 inches
Private collection

White Dogwood

Color woodblock print on heavy Japanese paper
7 1/2 x 10 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Study for White Dogwood

Charcoal and Chinese white on gray paper
7 x 10 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

The White Rose

Color woodblock print on paper
11 1/8 x 8 5/8 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Windblown Trees

Color woodblock print on paper
7 1/8 x 10 3/4 inches
Collection of Remak Ramsay

Zinnias and Marigolds

Color woodblock print on paper
10 1/8 x 7 1/4 inches
Private collection

Cahoon Museum OF AMERICAN ART

PO. Box 1853
4676 Falmouth Road
Cotuit, MA 02635
(508) 428-7581
www.cahoonmuseum.org

This publication was generously funded by ...

James R. Bakker
Antiques, Inc.
Provincetown,
Mass.