



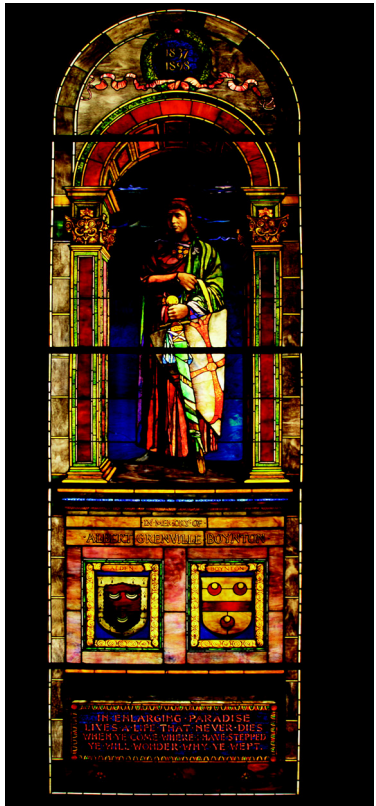
## 'John La Farge (1835-1910): American Artistic Genius And Renaissance Man'

NEWPORT, R.I. -- On August 28, William Vareika Fine Arts opened "John La Farge: American Artistic Genius and Renaissance Man," a special benefit exhibition and sale of more than 100 John La Farge paintings, watercolors, drawings, prints, photographs, letters, books, and opalescent glass windows. The exhibition will run through November 30 and will benefit the acquisition and conservation of 13 John La Farge opalescent glass windows to be installed at Salve Regina University in Newport.

This exhibition is in keeping with Bill and Alison Vareika's dual mission to offer important historic American art and to support charitable causes. During the past twenty years, the Vareikas have staged a number of benefit exhibitions that have raised strong public consciousness and considerable funding for a variety of charitable organizations and projects in the areas of the arts, education, the environment, health care, land and historic preservation, social services and animal welfare. They have been honored with several awards for these philanthropic efforts.

John La Farge is one of the most important American artists and cultural figures of the Nineteenth Century. La Farge was among the first American artists to paint landscapes in the open air, he produced the first impressionist experiments in America, created some of the most beautiful floral still lifes ever painted and traveled to Japan and the South Seas, producing paintings of his travels and publishing illustrated books of his adventures.

In 1876, La Farge accepted a commission to work with architect Henry Hobson Richardson on the interior decoration of Trinity Church in Copley Square, Boston, producing stained glass windows and monumental murals. This marked the beginning of La Farge's career as a decora-



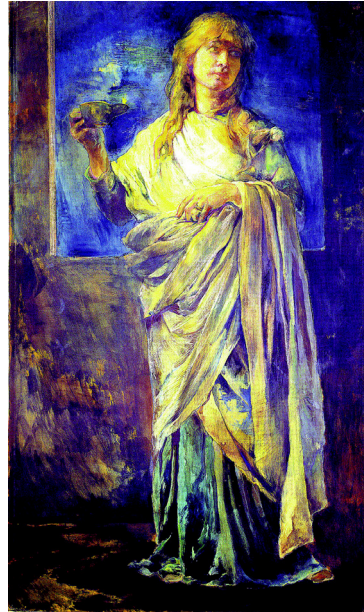
John LaFarge: "The Good Knight," Albert Grenville Boynton Memorial Window, Formerly in the First Unitarian Church, Detroit, 1899, opalescent leaded glass, 190 by 56 inches.



John La Farge, "Samoa. Sail by Moonlight," circa 1891, watercolor and gouache on paper, 7 1/2 by 9 1/2 inches.

tive artist, after which he received numerous domestic, public and ecclesiastical commissions. With his work at Trinity, La Farge is considered to have single-handedly initiated the American Renaissance movement. His experiments with stained glass led him to discover the use of opalescent glass in stained glass window manufacture as well as other creative innovations, such as plating. In 1879, La Farge established a window manufacturing company in New York. He displayed his work in glass at the Paris International Exposition of 1889, and in a statement on La Farge's work, the Exposition Jury said, "He has created in all its details an art unknown before."

The William Vareika Fine Arts gallery was born in 1987 out of a preservation crusade in the 1970s involving an endangered John La Farge decorated church in Newport. Bill Vareika abandoned law school plans to volunteer to direct the protracted legal battle to save the historic landmark church and its La Farge murals and opalescent glass windows. Vareika had discovered this important and eccentric artist in



John La Farge, "The Lampbearer (The Wise Virgin)," 1881, encaustic on paper, 55 by 36 inches, signed and dated, upper right.

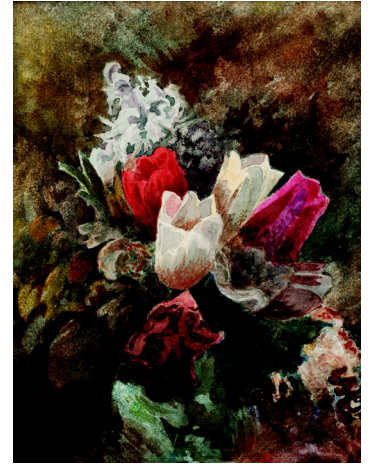
the one art history course he took as a pre-law major at Boston College. This academic experience and the ensuing preservation and restoration project altered his planned vocation in public service law as he developed a career as an art dealer and a passion for the life and art of John La Farge, who had lived in Newport. William Vareika Fine Arts subsequently mounted major John La Farge exhibitions at the Newport gallery in 1989 and 1995 and also at the Union League Club in New York in 1995.

Thirty years after the successful La Farge church battle, Bill Vareika has spearheaded another effort to save 13 La Farge opalescent glass windows that faced an uncertain future. Designed by the artist around 1890 for a private domestic chapel and music room in a Newport residence, these windows were reinstalled during the Great Depression in a Massachusetts convent after their original home was demolished. The convent recently suffered the same fate, and the windows will now be conserved and installed in a new chapel and spiritual life center designed by architect Robert A.M. Stern that is being constructed on the Newport campus of Salve Regina University.

Salve Regina's 75-acre campus offers what the National Trust for Historic Preservation has described as a "tour of the great architectural works of the Gilded Age." Twenty-one of the University's 44 buildings comprise seven contiguous Nineteenth Century estates by such notable architectural firms as that of Henry Hobson Richardson, McKim, Meade & White and Peabody & Stearns. The University sees itself as steward of this heritage and actively engages in preserving the splendor of its Gilded Age properties for future generations.

Vareika has worked diligently since 2001 to assure that this La Farge window ensemble be preserved intact, that the windows be acquired by Salve Regina University, and that they be conserved for the future. This is a unique story in which the acquisition and preservation of a collection of artworks has occasioned a major institutional construction project not previously planned. The chapel is scheduled to be dedicated in the Fall of 2010.

The exhibition "John La Farge: American Artistic Genius and Renaissance Man" highlights five of the conserved opalescent glass windows as well as two in their unrestored state in order to illustrate the conservation process. Photographs and letters are also on display, as well as books written by and about the artist.



John LaFarge, "Tulips and Hyacinth," 1867, watercolor, gouache and pencil on paper, 12 5/8 by 9 1/4 inches, signed and dated, lower right.

Among the works shown are oils such as the exquisite "Water Lilies in a White Bowl, with Red Table-Cover," 1859; the richly moody 1871 "Evening Study: Newport, R.I." ("From Hazard's Farm, Paradise"); "Windmill" ("Newport. Windmill Near Easton's Pond. Early Spring. Southeast Wind,") 1864; and the deeply meditative and artistically precocious 1864 "Wood Interior."

Included among the artist's watercolors are the Asian-inspired jewel, "Apple Blossoms and Butterfly," 1879; the subtle landscape, "Newport From the Basin on Bridge Street," circa 1865-70; "Tulips and Narcissus," 1867; and the delicate circa 1878 "Winter Evening Sky" ("Winter Evening Sky: Out-of-doors study, from nature. Water Color.").

Works from La Farge's extensive travels are represented, such as the mystical watercolor, "Mountain in Fog, From Our Garden, Nikko," 1886, and a letter written by the artist from Honolulu to his friend and editor, Richard Watson Gilder.

Drawings and studies in pencil, ink, watercolor and gouache, including architectural renderings, portrait and figure studies and numerous working sketches for his renowned stained glass windows are also on exhibition.

La Farge's wood engravings created to illustrate such volumes as Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* (Boston, 1865) and Abby Sage Richardson's *Songs from the Old Dramatists* (New York, 1873) are on view.

Significant among the examples of the master's opalescent leaded glass windows on display is the famous "Good Knight Window," measuring 190 by 56 inches and originally designed for the First Unitarian Church in Detroit, which is being offered for sale along with La Farge's watercolor preliminary sketch for the window.

The exhibition can be viewed at the Vareika gallery at 212-214 Bellevue Avenue in Newport through November 30. All proceeds from the benefit opening reception on August 28 and a percentage of exhibition sales will be donated to the Salve Regina University La Farge project. A full-color exhibition catalogue is available for a donation in any amount, payable to: Salve Regina University - La Farge Project.

Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm; Sunday, 1 to 6 pm; and by appointment. Admission is free and open to all. For information call 401-849-6149 or email info@vareikafinearts.com. The current exhibition is also available at www.vareikafinearts.com.