

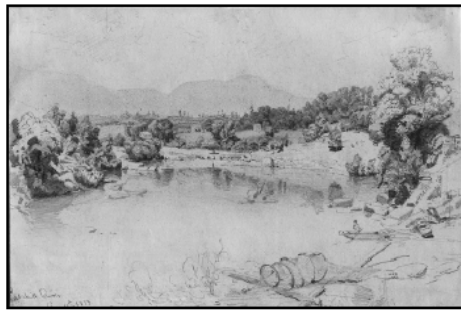
William Trost Richards, "View of Florence," 1855, pencil on paper, 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> by 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches.



William Trost Richards, "Edge of Forest with Bridge over Stream," pencil on paper, 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> by 17 inches.

## 'The Graphic Hand Of Genius'

### Drawings By The American Master, William Trost Richards (1833–1905)



William Trost Richards, "Catskill River," 1853, pencil on paper, 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> by 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches.



William Trost Richards, "Study for the Wissabickon," circa 1860, pencil on cream paper, 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> by 7 (arched top) inches.



William Trost Richards, "Nature Study," 1860, pencil on green paper, 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> by 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches.

NEWPORT, R.I. — Since William Vareika Fine Arts first opened on Bellevue Avenue in Newport 23 years ago with a successful exhibition of the artworks of William Trost Richards, the gallery has earned a national reputation as one of the leading specialists in the work of this important American artist. During this time, Richards has become one of the most studied and sought-after artists of his generation and is today considered one of the leading American landscape and marine painters of the Nineteenth Century. William Vareika Fine Arts has been presenting a very popular on-going exhibition of works by William Trost Richards in one of the firm's three large exhibition rooms.

More than 100 drawings by the artist are on display, including approximately 75 works in sepia and watercolor and more than 20 vibrant and varied oil paintings. Also on view are vintage photographs, letters, manuscripts, sketchbooks, and other memorabilia. Many of the artworks in this exhibition have descended in the family of the artist and have never before been exhibited or offered for sale.

This spring, to further celebrate the work of this extraordinary American artist, William Vareika Fine Arts has mounted a new special exhibition and sale of approximately 100 pencil and pen and ink drawings titled "The Graphic Hand of Genius: An Exhibition and Sale of Drawings by the American Master, William Trost Richards (1833–1905)."

Richards is considered one of the most talented draftsmen of the Hudson River School of artists. Writing in his 1836 "Essay on American Scenery," Thomas Cole could have been describing the future career of the then 3-year-old Richards when he noted that the pristine American landscape was "worthy of the admiration of the enlightened and the graphic hand of Genius." Writing in *The Art Journal* in 1877, the well-known critic G.W. Sheldon observed about Richards: "His drawing is never at fault, and the crispness of his touch is charming." The artist's patron and biographer, Harrison Morris, wrote in his 1912 biography of Richards about the artist's "unerring draughtsmanship" and that "only a draughtsman of genius can draw with paint in that faultless and fearless manner."

Born in Philadelphia in 1833, Richards showed promise in drawing while still a student, but was forced to leave high school in 1847 to help support his family upon the death of his father. His drafting skills helped him to find work designing ornamental metalwork for gas light fixtures, lamps and chandeliers for the Philadelphia firm of Archer, Warner and Miskey. Through his graphic design work, Richards achieved a high degree of technical proficiency while still a very young man. The draftsman furthered his development as an artist by frequent sketching excursions into the countryside along the Schuylkill and Wissahickon Rivers near his home, and during summer vacations along the Brandywine River of Pennsylvania and into the Catskill Mountains of New York State.

In 1850 Richards studied painting with the German landscape artist Paul Weber in Philadelphia. By the spring of 1854 Richards had left the lighting firm and established himself as an artist in a studio on Chestnut Street. In August of 1855 he left to study and travel in Europe. In Dusseldorf he was especially influenced by the precisionist German draftsmen. Early in his career Richards painted and sketched in the Arcadian spirit of the Hudson River School.

In the summer of 1874 the artist visited Newport for the first time and found himself captivated by the "unusual beauties" of the Narragansett Bay landscape. He purchased his first Newport home in 1875. In 1882 he built a large house, "Gray Cliff," in Jamestown on Conanicut Island, across the bay from Newport. Richards became best known for his seascapes. From this point, Richards divided his time between Rhode Island and Chester County, Penn., where he acquired a farm near the Brandywine River in

1884. He also made frequent trips abroad.

Richards sketched enthusiastically wherever he went and in every kind of weather. His drawings are remarkable in their precision and perfection; each one is a painstakingly produced and polished work of art. Even in his quickest sketch, Richards holds true to his Ruskinian devotion to nature, in the acute details of its most intimate scale as well as the grand proportions of landscape on a geological scale. He carefully preserved his sketches that documented his travels, and served the artist as reference-points and inspiration for large-scale paintings. When asked by aspiring young artists how to learn to paint, Richards used to reply, "Learn to draw!"

Richards was a member of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, from which he received the Gold Medal for lifetime achievement in art in February of 1905 (included in the gallery exhibition); the National Academy of Design; the Royal Academy, London; and the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art. The artist died in Newport in 1905.

Richards's work has been the focus of a number of important museum exhibitions in the United States and England. An exhibition of drawings, watercolors and oil sketches is scheduled for June 23-September 26 at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University. A major retrospective exhibition of landscape, marine and coastal paintings is planned by the Brandywine River Museum for the fall of 2011. Also in 2011, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts will host an exhibition of an important collection of 110 miniature watercolors, previously shown in the popular 1982-83 exhibition "Tokens of a Friendship: Miniature Watercolors by William Trost Richards" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. These works were sold by William Vareika Fine Arts to a benefactor who will be loaning them to the academy. This exhibition will also travel to Newport in the summer of 2012 to help celebrate the Centennial of the founding of the Newport Art Association and Museum. Richards's artworks are represented in museums and private collections throughout the United States and Great Britain.

The Vareika gallery's exhibition "The Graphic Hand of Genius" is comprised of approximately 100 pencil and pen and ink drawings. Several of the works have been exhibited previously in "Never At Fault: The Drawings of William Trost Richards" at The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, N.Y., 1986. The Vareika exhibition's selection of drawings reflects Richards's travels in Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Great Britain, as well as sketching trips made in the United States to the Catskills, Adirondacks, Washington State, throughout Pennsylvania and along the New England coast.

Among the works in pencil are: the dramatic "Devil's Bridge, Switzerland" and "Alpine Vignette"; "Kresheim Forest"; "Near Florence," 1855; and "View of Florence"; the placid "Lake Scene," 1853 and "Catskill River," 1853; "Parkland," 1867; "Branches of Leaves," 1869; the loosely-rendered "Country Fence"; the delicately articulated "Fern"; works of majesty-in-miniature such as "Italian Landscape," "German Alpine Village," and "Trees and Mountains," 1867; and a variety of lovely and precisely detailed tree studies. Drawings in ink include several sea and coastal studies of widely varying energy and mood.

William Vareika Fine Arts, Ltd is at 212-214 Bellevue Avenue, just blocks from the Newport Art Museum and the Newport mansions and doors from the historic Newport Casino building and International Tennis Hall of Fame and Museum. Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm; Sunday, 1 to 6 pm; and by appointment. For further information call 401-849-6149 or email [info@vareikafinearts.com](mailto:info@vareikafinearts.com). The current exhibitions are also on view at [www.vareikafinearts.com](http://www.vareikafinearts.com).