



ALEXANDER HARRISON

American, 1853-1930

The Fisher Boy, 1883

Oil on canvas

City of Davenport Art Collection

Gift of C.A. Ficke, 1925.129

The Fisher Boy



Alexander Harrison (1853–1930) This plein-air realist painter studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts before joining the U.S. Coastal and Geodetic Survey, charting the East and West Coasts between the years of 1872 and 1878. After continuing his studies in San Francisco, then Paris, he settled permanently in France and earned recognition while exhibiting throughout Europe.

A product of its time

Along with James McNeill Whistler and Mary Cassatt, Alexander Harrison was an expatriate. Initially traveling to Paris to study with the well-known academic painter, Jean Léon Gérôme, Harrison ended up becoming an important member of the Pont-Avon art colony in Brittany, where Paul Gauguin would eventually work.

Take a closer look

The boy in the painting wears a bright green coat that contrasts with the soft red brick wall against which he leans. The genre painting reflects the poverty that was prevalent at the time and is a direct nod to the artist's love of seascapes. The hoop that the boy carries highlights his poverty by creating a frame around his worn and tattered clothes.

Did you know?

Harrison is known for his exquisite seascapes and human figures within this setting. In a description of the Atlantic Ocean as viewed from Harrison's cottage on the Brittany coast, the writer Marcel Proust penned, "We have seen the sea successively turn blood red, purple, nacreous with silver, gold, white, emerald green, and yesterday we were dazzled by an entirely pink sea specked with blue sails."

On your own

Landscape, Memory, Sensation: <http://davidadams.cleveland.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Cleveland-Alexander-Harrison-and-Proust-Antiques-Magazine-2.pdf>