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Skylands

Edwin Havas
Seton Hall University

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EDWIN HAVAS
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Paintings from Northwestern New Jersey by

EDWIN HAVAS

Walsh Library Gallery
Seton Hall University
May 2 - July 17, 1996
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To the Seton Hall family; administrators past and present, faculty, staff, and above all the many wonderful students I have been privileged to teach these thirty-six years.

DEDICATION:

To Judy; always so loving, patient, supportive.
PREFACE

Having taught an estimated four thousand students the fundamentals of drawing and watercolor, Edwin Havas has decided to retire from Seton Hall. As art teacher at the Seton Hall Preparatory school (1960-1976) and, subsequently, as faculty member in the University’s Department of Art and Music (1976-96), Ed has been intimately connected with Seton Hall for the past thirty-six years.

His presence at the university is and will long remain pervasive. Not only has he touched the lives of countless students, alumni, colleagues, administrators, and staff members, but there are few offices on campus that don’t have one of his watercolors on their walls. Ed has portrayed Seton Hall presidents, rendered, in watercolors, just about every on-and off-campus building, and has provided art work for numerous university publications, from calendars to magazine jackets.

Ed’s generosity has become proverbial. No fund-raising event goes by without his support, whether in time or in kind. In all this Judy, his wife of forty years, is right behind him. If Ed gives away a watercolor, chances are Judy has framed it. If Ed has offered his help at a university event, Judy is by his side.

As a farewell gesture, the University has awarded Ed with its highest honor—the McQuaid medal for distinguished service. It is appropriate that Ed’s good-bye to ARMS (Seton Hall’s standard abbreviation for the Department of Art and Music) is in the form of an exhibition in the gallery of the new Walsh Library that he has rendered in several of his watercolors. This exhibition of large acrylic landscapes show off some of the best qualities of Ed Havas’ art—his profound understanding of nature and his ability to capture its essence in paints.

We are grateful to all who have contributed to his exhibition: to Elaine Dee, for her catalogue essay; to Dr. Bernhard Scholz for his monetary contribution to the exhibition; to Alison Wenz Dale and Arline Lowe for designing the catalogue; and to Jo Anne Cotz, director of the Library Gallery, for her kind cooperation. Above all, however, our thanks go to Ed, for sharing his art, for his long-time service to the university, and for being a wonderful teacher and colleague.

Petra ten-Doesschate Chu
Chairperson
Department of Art and Music
Looking At Tammany Mountain

...that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years...

Walt Whitman
INTRODUCTION

The headline of an exhibition review in the New York Times a couple of years ago read: “Artists Unafraid to Ignore Beauty.” While the reviewer was not generous in praise for the exhibition, he found most of the works at least acceptable. In today’s critical climate it is important to be reminded that while other movements may hold center stage, there is concurrently a large group of gifted artists whose careers have been motivated by the pursuit of beauty. Edwin J. Havas, whose work is celebrated in the present exhibition, is part of this group.

He is a native of New Jersey, having spent his young years in Livingston. Music and art were important ingredients of his home life and already as a teenager art teachers in the public schools he attended recognized his talent and encouraged his interest. In one respect he and his younger brother seemed to have been destined to carry on a family tradition, as both followed in the footsteps of two uncles, also brothers, who became professional artists.

Edwin Havas’ commitment to a career in art was made after three years in the Air Force. He enrolled as a student at the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Art in Newark, New Jersey. A three-year art school, it was then, during the 1950s, in its heyday with a strong faculty of practicing artists and a program that attracted talented, serious students. Havas cites in particular the painting instructors Hans Weingaertner, Henry Gasser, James Carlin, and Avery Johnson as the most influential in his training. The vitality of the school through the interaction of highly professional teachers and dedicated students is confirmed by the number of successful artists it produced during these years.

Four years after his marriage in 1956 to Judith Moyles, Havas’ teaching career had its auspicious beginning. He was invited by Monsignor Thomas Tuohy to establish an art course at Seton Hall Preparatory School, then located on the University campus. In addition to teaching Applied Art and Art Appreciation, Havas moderated the Art Club, the Ukranian Club, and the Portuguese Club. Undaunted by an already well-filled schedule, he added theater to his artistic endeavors, designing and constructing some thirteen stage sets for musicals produced at the Prep. and other area high schools. When he left the school in 1975, in tribute to his achievements as a teacher, the Edwin J. Havas Medallion for Excellence in Art was established to be given annually to a graduating senior outstanding in art.

During his tenure at Seton Hall Prep. Havas also worked actively in his studio. He had discovered a particular affinity for watercolor as a medium, finding the challenge of this difficult and unforgiving material consistent with his temperament and manner of working. In his own words, “instinct and intuition describe much of what takes place in watercolor.” It should be pointed out, however, that along with instinct his skills are based on intense observation of the subject, on reading, on looking at the work of others, past and present, and perfecting his technique by constant practice. He has been judged a master watercolorist, having won over a hundred awards including the Grand Prix pour Aquarelle in an international competition in Monaco and the New Jersey Watercolor Society’s Silver Medal and Best in Show awards. He is a member of the prestigious American Watercolor Society and member and past president of the New Jersey Watercolor Society.
In the 1980s he began conducting workshops in watercolor painting and with the assistance of his wife, Judith, as organizer, he has taken groups as far away as Italy and Ireland and as near by as Frost Valley, New York where some thirty-five workshops have occurred.

Havas’ decision to focus the exhibition on paintings of the Skylands (a general term that the state has designated for Sussex and Warren counties in northwest New Jersey), was the confluence of many factors in his thinking and experience. His artistic creed, as he has stated, is not to be concerned with particular trends or movements, but to concentrate on finding a subject he loves and painting it in the way best suited to himself. Even prior to moving his home and studio to Newton, in Sussex County, New Jersey, he had explored the Skylands region often, painting in the open air on his portable easel or recording a view in snapshots to be used as source material when working up a picture in the studio. His love of the land, the woods, and the mountains stems from boyhood days. It is not surprising that he looks upon Edward Hopper as a kindred spirit and the artist he admires more than any other. Hopper wrote, “My aim in painting has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature.” The “mute land,” as Hopper termed it, offers Havas the tranquil, poetic, sometimes mysterious subject matter he requires for the expression of his own inner feelings and ideas of composition and color.

A strong impetus towards concentrating on Skylands and especially the Delaware Water Gap area came when a colleague gave him a copy of John McPhee’s brilliant book In Suspect Terrain to read while he was recuperating from knee surgery. The book brings together two of the artist’s greatest passions: the study of history and the study of science. McPhee elaborates on the geological history of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. His descriptions of the formation of the Water Gap over millions of years by the Delaware River “like a thief through a gap in the fence” and other natural manifestations, like ice sheets, that contributed to its present appearance, reinforced Havas’ interest in the area. He is not the first artist to be lured by the Gap’s unusual silhouette; in the nineteenth century George Inness and Asher B. Durand, among others, had journeyed to paint it.

Havas’ observations of the Gap included in the exhibition study the formation from a variety of angles and times. In “Gap View” (No. 7) the mountains in the distance act as a hazy, blue backdrop in atmospheric perspective to the colored grasses and graceful trees in the foreground. In “October Gap” (No. 11) the scene is transformed into a study of the effect of light and shadow on colors of vegetation, water, and rock, without losing sight of the structure of the mountains or the textures of its various parts. The point of view is close-up, contrasting with “In Suspect Terrain” (No. 28) in which a long view of fields, woods, and mountains are combined in a beautiful pattern of colors and shapes in the soft air. A sense of grandeur and expansiveness is communicated.

In these compositions, as in many others, the sky and clouds are important elements in the landscape. Among the experiences that Havas brings to his art is his training as a weather observer acquired while he was in the Air Force. He sees clouds and atmospheric conditions through an expert’s
eyes. Weather is always an important element in his work. Tammany, as the large mountain on the New Jersey side of the Gap is called, provides the most dramatic sight in the area. The artist has written of it, "I found the subject matter at once both traditional in the esthetic sense, and contemporary in the wonderful abstract patterns of rock formations and vegetation as it responds to the changing seasons." About the winter scene "Looking at Tammany Mountain" (No. 16) he goes on to say, "For the sake of what I thought would be appropriate to the success of the painting, I took some artistic liberty and chose to leave out a grove of large trees, as well as some smaller growth. Additionally, I chose to emphasize a strong horizontal at the top of the mountain, which in fact is only slightly more irregular. Judgments such as these served to express what I felt about the mountain rather than what I saw. The low, 9 a.m. winter sunlight created beautiful patterns as it skittered laterally into the Gap, catching the more prominent formations... I again employed esthetic license to simplify and weed out... By working this way, I felt a great sense of unity could be achieved." The clarity of the light, the strong juxtapositions of light and dark areas, and the precision of depiction of this great bulk of land result in an intensely powerful picture. Changing the time of day as well as the season makes for strikingly contrasting compositions. "Tammany Moon" (No. 31) is mysterious and somewhat foreboding, whereas the bright light of "Tammany Afternoon" (No. 10) reveals the stratified rock, trees, and ground cover in rather sharp detail. Both pictures zero in on the upper portion of the mountain in order to explore its essential character more minutely.

If a landscape artist can be called "an eye", Edwin Havas' eye can be called a roving one, as his brush and canvas or paper have taken him as far as northeastern Pennsylvania near the New York State border to paint "Koenig's Rock" (No. 22). John McPhee writes, "Rocks are the record of events that took place at the time they formed. They are books..." and "while geologists argue, the rocks just sit there, and sometimes they seem to smile." The seemingly precarious arrangement of strata and boulders that are ponderous at the same time, the busy pattern made by the numerous cracks, and the delicacy of the surrounding foliage demanded a realistic approach, as opposed to "Glacial Relics" (No. 5) where an impressionistic approach to the loose scrabble of glacial deposit was more appropriate.

Geology, however, is not the artist’s only concern in his studies of Skylands. The verdant landscapes of "The View from Newton" (No. 14), "Stillwater" (No. 15), and "Sussex Summer" (No. 17), project a tender, sunny mood relating to human responses to the warm days of summer or early autumn. The October landscapes "Bushkill" (No. 2) and "Maples" (No. 19) with their brilliant colors and the shady woods illuminated by the stream in "Reflections, Flatbrook" (No. 29) reveal his ability to find the exceptional, wonderful effect. In "Sparta Brook" (No. 20) and "Newton Rocks" (No. 26) the manipulation of lights and darks and the extremely limited palette evoke the chill of winter. The deep color of the stream and the bulk of the rock are balanced by the vibrant linear rhythms of the trees. In "Along the Delaware" (No. 25) another kind of rhythm prevails—the viewer's eye moves from the river in the foreground to the snow, then to
the middle ground of trees, until finally the eye is drawn to the far distance. "Walpack" (No. 30) is a grand expanse of landscape that invites the viewer to look deep and high and far. There is, however, always the knowledge that the painter is obliged by the limitations of his canvas to choose only a fragment of the total landscape. We the viewers have the privilege of sharing his selective vision. We share as well his emotions, as he has said the pictures are as much what he feels about a subject as what he sees. In a time of environmental concerns as population expansion and movement threaten New Jersey and Pennsylvania wilderness areas, these pictures become valuable records of the landscape the artist knows and loves.

After concentrating on painting in watercolors for most of his career, Havas turned to a medium new to him, acrylic, for this recent work. He found acrylic liberating, allowing him to paint on a larger scale and unlike watercolor, with the capability of making corrections and changes as the picture progresses on the easel. Yet he has not deserted watercolor altogether as the eight vibrant examples in the exhibition attest.

Edwin Havas states that more than any other activity he has loved teaching, and it has been confirmed that his students have loved him. He says of his retirement that he does not regard it as an end but as a beginning, and that one thing always leads to another.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S.Eliot, Little Gidding

Elaine Evans Dee
Sparta Brook

The woods are lovely, dark and deep...

Robert Frost
CATALOGUE

1. Delaware Morning
   1989
   Watercolor; 21 x 29 inches
   Lent by Arch and Nancy Nicholas

2. Bushkill
   1990
   Oil; 32 x 40 inches
   Lent by Mary-Claire Havas and Anthony Trongone

3. Pennsylvania Woods
   1991
   Watercolor; 29 x 21 inches
   Lent by Judith Havas

4. Deer Lake
   1992
   Acrylic; 24 x 24 inches

5. Glacial Relics
   1992
   Acrylic; 24 x 30 inches

6. Along 611
   1993
   Acrylic; 48 x 36 inches

7. Gap View
   1993
   Acrylic; 48 x 36 inches

8. View from Allamuchy
   1993
   Watercolor; 19 x 29 inches

9. Middleville
   1993
   Watercolor; 21 x 29 inches

10. Tammany Afternoon
    1993
    Acrylic; 30 x 40 inches

11. October Gap
    1993
    Acrylic; 36 x 72 inches

12. View From Hope
    1994
    Acrylic; 40 x 30 inches

13. Country Road
    1994
    Acrylic; 36 x 48 inches

14. View From Newton
    1994
    Acrylic; 48 x 60 inches

15. Stillwater
    1994
    Oil; 36 x 60 inches
    Lent by Jeffrey and Jennifer Feldmann

16. Looking at Tammany Mountain
    1994
    Acrylic; 36 x 48 inches
    Lent by Judith Havas
17. Sussex Summer
   1994
   Acrylic; 36 x 48 inches

18. Tracy's Woods
   1994
   Watercolor; 21 x 29 inches
   Lent by Barbara and Tracy Cate

19. Maples
   1994
   Acrylic; 30 x 40 inches

20. Sparta Brook
   1995
   Acrylic; 48 x 36 inches

21. Blossom Time
   1995
   Acrylic; 48 x 36 inches

22. Koenig's Rock
   1995
   Acrylic; 36 x 42 inches

23. Sussex Winter
   1995
   Acrylic; 48 x 60 inches
   Lent by William and Susan Haring

24. Cornfield
   1995
   Watercolor; 19 x 29 inches

25. Along The Delaware
   1995
   Acrylic; 30 x 40 inches

26. Newton Rocks
   1995
   Acrylic; 30 x 40 inches

27. White Pine
   1995
   Acrylic; 24 x 30 inches

28. In Suspect Terrain
   1996
   Acrylic; 36 x 72 inches

29. Reflections, Flatbrook
   1996
   Acrylic; 48 x 36 inches

30. Walpack
   1996
   Acrylic; 48 x 60 inches

31. Tammany Moon
   1996
   Acrylic; 30 x 40 inches

Unless otherwise noted lent by artist
Koenig's Rock

...while geologists argue, the rocks just sit there, and sometimes they seem to smile.

John McPhee