



## 21: Thomas Ridgeway Gould *The West Wind* (1876)

Cynthia L. Culbert

*Careless and American in aspect, her pulse-beats throbbing through a belt of Western stars, the glad incarnation seems to have just cooled in the Pacific the light foot she sets on the shore of an untamed continent.<sup>1</sup>*

So described in an 1876 review, Thomas Ridgeway Gould's *The West Wind* was the embodiment of westward expansion. The original sculpture, made in 1870, was so popular that Gould made at least seven more marble copies in two sizes, the last in 1876. The sculpture in the Memorial Art Gallery's collection, as well as personifying the American ideal of eminent domain and westward drive, also made quite a westerly journey herself. Tied to Rochester and the Memorial Art Gallery even through her creator, she took several trips and many decades to arrive at her final destination.

All the versions of *The West Wind* were carved in Florence, Italy, where Gould had resided since 1868. He had spent most of his life in Boston, working as a dry goods merchant and studying art in his spare time. After the Civil War, his business failing, he decided to try his hand at sculpture. As many sculptors before him had done, he made his way to Italy, where the old masters, the marble, and the carvers were abundant.

*The West Wind*'s first connection to the Memorial Art Gallery was through Gould's family. He was the uncle of Marion Stratton Gould, who had died at the age of twelve and whose mother, Mrs. Samuel Gould of Rochester, created an endowment in her memory. The Marion Stratton Gould Fund is still used to this day to acquire some of the Gallery's most important works. Mrs. Gould also bequeathed her brother-in-law's marble relief *The Ghost in Hamlet* to the Gallery.

But parts of *The West Wind*'s itinerary between Florence and Rochester are clouded. In 1871, the first documented *West Wind*, the original work, came to America. It was owned by Demas Barnes,<sup>2</sup> and according to the catalogue of the exhibition was the one that appeared in the prestigious Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, a six-month celebration of the country's founding.<sup>3</sup> (For this exhibition Gould had submitted, from Italy, applications for space for four sculptures: *The West Wind*, *The Water Babies*, *The Rose*, and *The Lily*.<sup>4</sup>) But the situation becomes confusing because another source lists the version of *The West Wind* on view at the exhibition as having been lent by "its owner, Mr. Powers, of Rochester, N.Y."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the Centennial catalogue was known for its mistakes and inconsistencies,<sup>6</sup> so the question remains: which of the two versions of *The West Wind* appeared at the 1876 Exposition? Clearly, parts of the story of her journey from Florence to MAG have yet to emerge, but a good, if circumstantial, case can be made that, the catalogue aside, it was the Powers version that appeared in the Philadelphia exhibition.<sup>7</sup>

(Facing page)  
Thomas Ridgeway Gould,  
1818–1881  
*The West Wind*, 1876  
Marble, 70½ x 23 x 33¼ in.  
Gift of the Isaac Gordon Estate  
through the Lincoln  
Rochester Trust Company,  
66.18

What we do know is that "Mr. Powers"—Daniel W. Powers, a prosperous Rochester banker—bought several sculptures from the Exposition,<sup>8</sup> and that he had also gone art-buying in Italy in 1875. It is possible that he met Gould in Florence and placed his order for *The West Wind* there rather than risk losing it to another buyer in Philadelphia, and taking advantage of the free shipping offered by the Exposition for works by American artists living abroad.<sup>9</sup>

Unknown photographer  
Marion Stratton Gould  
(1877–1890)  
Hand-colored photograph  
on opaque glass, ca. 1885–90  
23¼ x 19¼ in.  
Bequest of Mrs. Samuel Gould,  
35.47



Powers Building, ca. 1878  
Albumen print  
Courtesy George  
Eastman House  
Photograph by George  
H. Monroe, 1851–1916

When the Centennial Exposition closed on November 10, 1876, Powers's *West Wind* would have traveled northwest to Rochester, New York, to take her place in the Statue Room in the elegant new Powers Gallery. A private art gallery in the famous fire-proof Powers Building erected in 1870, it was open to the public for twenty-five cents, seven days a week and two evenings.<sup>10</sup> Powers began collecting art on the previously mentioned trip to Italy in 1875. He claims to have purchased one painting and then, being so put out by the red tape he had to go through to have it shipped to Rochester, decided it would be no more trouble to send a whole case of pictures, and so bought more.<sup>11</sup> He commissioned many copies of old master paintings—a very popular practice at the time—but as he grew more interested in art and more skilled at identifying good pictures, he began to purchase contemporary art both abroad and in America, including work by Rochester artists Emma Lampert Cooper and Charles Gruppe.<sup>12</sup> His gallery grew from one room, to four, to twenty-two,<sup>13</sup> until it eventually occupied three floors.



Thomas Ridgeway Gould  
1818–1881  
*The West Wind*, 1870  
Marble, 71 x 26 x 35 in.  
Collection of the St. Louis  
Mercantile Library at the  
University of Missouri–St. Louis  
Gift of Mrs. Demas Barnes



Thomas Ridgeway Gould  
1818–1881  
*The West Wind*, 1876  
near telephone booth in  
Powers Building, Rochester  
Memorial Art Gallery  
curatorial files

The Powers Gallery was known throughout the country and successfully aroused community interest in the arts.<sup>14</sup> Many thought it put Rochester "on the map" in the eyes of the rest of the world. But several unfortunate incidents occurred towards the end of Powers's life and after his death that stripped this valuable resource from the community. Powers, a self-made man who had gone from rags to riches in Rochester, had originally intended to leave his entire collection to the city. But when his request was denied for tax relief on the forty-thousand dollars a year it cost to maintain the gallery<sup>15</sup> (the city even tried to levy a tax on the gallery as a "place of amusement"<sup>16</sup>) Powers changed his will, leaving his entire \$1.1 million to his wife and five children and nothing for Rochester or for the maintenance of the gallery.<sup>17</sup> The family tried to come up with some way to save the gallery, for the public outcry was fierce. Even the Rochester Art Club formed a committee dedicated to saving the gallery, with George L. Herdle, the future first director of the Memorial Art Gallery, among its members.<sup>18</sup> In January 1898, about a year after Powers's death, the first auction of the best works from the Powers Art Gallery was held in New York City. *The West Wind* did not make it to the sale.

Some of the very largest paintings and sculptures were left behind, though they were moved from the former art gallery to other parts of the building in





the spring of 1898 to make room for office space.<sup>19</sup> It is not known where *The West Wind* was moved to at that time, though, due to her size and weight, it is doubtful that she was moved very often.

In 1952, Memorial Art Gallery curator Isabel Herdle was putting together a show celebrating the seventy-fifth birthday of the Rochester Art Club. According to Gallery lore, she went looking for *The West Wind* at the Powers Building, along with several other large items that were known never to have left the building. Herdle found everything she was searching for except *The West Wind*. She showed photographs to the owners of the building and various tenants, but no one had seen the life-sized sculpture. Where could such a large piece of marble hide? Herdle persisted, and finally, around 1965, she showed the pictures to a woman mopping the floors who knew exactly where *The West Wind* was hiding.

Thomas Ridgeway Gould,  
1818–1881  
*The Ghost in Hamlet*, ca. 1877  
Carved marble, 20½ x 24½ in.  
Bequest of Mrs. Samuel Gould,  
30.67

On the second floor, next to the staircase, by the phone booth, Ms. Herdle met the object of her long quest.<sup>20</sup> She convinced the owners of the building to donate the sculpture to the Memorial Art Gallery so that it could be cared for and again be made available to the citizenry of Rochester as Powers had intended. It was in desperate need of some attention, but after a good cleaning it looked much as it had when it graced the Statue Room on the sixth floor of the Powers Gallery.

And so, after about a ninety-year journey, from a foreign country, across an ocean, with a possible stop at a grand celebration for the young country, a stint in an impressive private gallery, and then decades of neglect and disregard, *The West Wind* arrived at the place where her maker's sister-in-law had ensured she would be in good and suitable company.

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