

D irector's Foreword

I became aware of the exceptional collection of American art at the Memorial Art Gallery some thirty-five years ago. As a Kress Fellow at the National Gallery of Art, I was helping to organize the centennial exhibition of the work of John Sloan and, after making a quick trip to Rochester in 1970, realized that the Gallery not only owned two of Sloan's finest city genre paintings but possessed an exemplary collection of American painting and sculpture that spanned three (and now four) centuries. The publication of *Seeing America* underscores both the quality and the breadth of our collection of American art. We are delighted to be able to share these treasures with a wider audience.

The Memorial Art Gallery, from its founding in 1913, has been an ardent advocate for the exhibition and acquisition of American art. Six of the first seven paintings to enter the permanent collection were by American artists, including Jonas Lie's *Morning on the River*, given in memory of James G. Averell, son of Gallery founder Emily Sibley Watson. And it is no coincidence that the Gallery's first director, George Herdle, was a practicing artist whose ambitious exhibition program for MAG brought work by emerging as well as established Americans to Rochester. Within the first five years of the Gallery's existence, no fewer than sixty-two American artists were invited to exhibit at MAG, and several group exhibitions were held—12 Contemporary American Artists in 1916 and, two years later, *Collection of Paintings Selected From the Leading American Exhibitions of the Season of 1917–1918*. Over the past ninety-three years the Gallery has continued to enhance its American collection. That the first entry in this book is devoted to a painting by the eighteenth-century master John Singleton Copley and the last to photography by contemporary African American artist Lorna Simpson underscores MAG's rich and expansive journey of acquisition.

Though the first catalogue of the art collection of Oxford University was apparently written by the janitor of the Bodleian Library, we have relied on the expertise and insights of many scholars who, in the words of our chief curator Marjorie Searl, "represent some of the most brilliant minds working in this field." To them, our heartfelt thanks, and particularly to Michael Kammen, Newton C. Farr Professor of History, Cornell University, whose introduction sets the collection against the broader background of the American narrative. Marjorie Searl has directed the planning of the catalogue from the beginning and, indeed, has contributed several key essays. In addition, she also worked closely with editor John Blanpied and designer Kathryn D'Amanda, dear friends and most valuable contributors to this project. Without their respective leadership skills and dedication, this publication would not have been possible.

I want to thank the many generous underwriters who have made it possible to share the insightful essays written about the MAG collection with students of American art everywhere. The beneficence of the Henry Luce Foundation has truly enriched our understanding of the field by its significant encouragement of research, exhibitions, and publications. We are most grateful for their interest in this publication as we are for their support of other Gallery initiatives pertaining to our American collection. Our thanks also go to the National Endowment for the Arts for its encouragement and generosity. I personally want to thank the Gallery Council of the Memorial Art Gallery for its special and meaningful contribution to this project made in honor of my twenty years as director. The use of the Herbert W. Vanden Brul Fund, established by our late Gallery president who loved and collected American art, seems most appropriate, as does the use of funds from the Thomas and Marion Hawks Memorial Fund established by two individuals who spent their lives



Isabel Herdle (1905–2004),
associate director and
curator, standing;
Gertrude Herdle Moore
(1896–1993), director, seated

supporting and enhancing the arts in Rochester. Other gifts were provided by Nancy Turner, The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation, Monroe Litho, Inc. Finally, contributions were made in memory of Gallery friends Florence Macomber, Eleanor McQuilkin, and Eleanor Searl.

On behalf of the board of managers and staff of the Memorial Art Gallery, we dedicate this book to the memories of Gertrude Herdle Moore and Isabel Herdle, who devoted themselves to the Gallery for over fifty years. Their vision, passion, and insight informed every aspect of this institution, including its remarkable collection of American art.

Grant Holcomb

The Mary W. and Donald R. Clark Director of the Memorial Art Gallery