

American Artist Everett Shinn

Member of The Eight and The Ashcan School of Painting

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The youngest artist of The Eight, Everett Shinn's life and work revolved around the bright lure of the theater and fascinating city scenes.

Everett Shinn was born on November 6, 1876 to a Quaker family in Woodstown, New Jersey. He studied mechanical drawing in Philadelphia at first — a pursuit which he soon found rather boring — then enrolled at The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Shinn also had a job with the *Philadelphia Press* by age seventeen, working as a "visual reporter" who quick-sketched interesting, newsworthy events. At this point in time, photography had not yet become the main source of images for newspapers and cameras were too cumbersome and unreliable, giving an edge to artists who could rush out and vividly depict any exciting happenings.

Everett and The Eight

While in Philadelphia, Shinn became part of an artistic circle that initially included painters Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens and George Luks. Collectively, this group would start the Ashcan School (alternately spelled as Ash Can School) movement, intent on portraying true scenes of American life — with American urban life being the primary focus. The group would soon be rounded out by Maurice Prendergast, Ernest Lawson and Arthur B. Davies and was officially known as The Eight, but the artists were often called Ashcan painters by critics commenting derisively on The Eight's "grimy" or "gritty" sources of inspiration.

As a visual reporter, Shinn had a keen eye for compelling real-life moments and was able to produce excellent work for The Eight, capturing fights on the street or tenement scenes. But in truth, Shinn was even more intrigued by the glamour of the city: the rich pageant of society people, the cultural institutions, alluring department store windows, elegant restaurants, and especially the theater. Paintings such as *The Hippodrome*, *London* and *The Vaudeville Act* show Shinn's fascination with actresses and actors, costumes, lighting and staging, along with the crowds who filled the theater and music hall seats. Shinn's 1900 trip to Europe further broadened his perspective and palette, and marked a shift from his predominant use of pastels to oil paint.

Many Talents and Marriages

Shinn soon left Philadelphia to work for the *New York World* newspaper. Most of The Eight would eventually gravitate to New York as well, but beyond that circle Shinn befriended architect and bon vivant Stanford White. White, whom Shinn called a "red-headed wild man" of great influence, helped Shinn secure several mural project commissions and meet Manhattan's elite. A 1901 self-portrait shows how the sharp-dressed, handsome and charming Shinn enjoyed developing his artistic persona, a process which he once humorously described as "great fun. being an artist. with temperament."