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Gilbert Munger Quest for Distinction

Organized and circulated by the
Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth

EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Tweed Museum of Art
Duluth, MN
July 26-October 12,
2003

The North Point Gallery
San Francisco, CA
January 14-March 6,
2004

Lyman Allyn Art Museum
New London, CT
Sept 24 - Dec 5,
2004



The book *Gilbert Munger: Quest for Distinction* is published by Afton Historical Society Press in conjunction with the Tweed Museum of Art, authored by J. Gray Sweeney and Michael D. Schroeder, with an introduction by Alan Wallach. On-line catalogue raisonné at www.GilbertMunger.com

Background image: Unknown Photographer, Nice, France, 1890, *Studio Portrait of Gilbert Munger*, Published as the frontispiece in Memoir: Gilbert Munger, Landscape Artist, 1836 (sic)-1903, New York: DeVinne Press, 1904. **Oval image:** Massimiliano Contini (Italian, born ca. 1850); *Bust Portrait of Gilbert Munger*, 1891, cast bronze, 24 x 16 x 9"; Collection of St. Louis Historical Society, Duluth, MN



Minnehaha Falls, 1868, oil on canvas, 108 x 72"; Collection of Notre Dame de Namur University, Belmont, CA

The first monumental canvas Munger ever painted, together with a large version of *Niagara Falls* completed just before his death, form the exhibition's "bookends." After his brothers moved to Minnesota in 1859, Munger established a studio in St. Paul. It was there that he produced this view of *Minnehaha Falls*, an upper Midwest landmark made legendary by Longfellow's 1855 poem "The Song of Hiawatha." Exhibited in St. Paul, Chicago and San Francisco, it was purchased by the California real-estate developer William Chapman Ralston. The painting was hung on the main staircase of his mansion, where it conveniently advertised Munger's artistic abilities to a constant stream of Ralston's wealthy, high society guests. The mansion is now Ralston Hall

at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont. This exhibition marks the first time the painting has been moved from that location in over 130 years.

As the details of this once-forgotten artist's life become clear, an engaging narrative emerges. And like all great stories, this one is colored by youthful dreams, the search for hero-mentors, dogged pursuit of a far-off goal, hard work, risk, and sacrifice, career-building encounters and associations, a pinnacle of achievement and success, and in the end, a descent into obscurity.

Exactly one-hundred years after his death, this long-overdue study reveals Gilbert Davis Munger as a man who could not only create compelling images, but who promoted and advanced his art by forging his own path into a late-nineteenth century "high society" of artists, collectors, critics and scientists. The son of a Connecticut laborer whose artistic ambitions would later be recognized by European nobility, Munger was the ultimate self-made man of his time. He taught himself to paint, and almost single-handedly fashioned and managed a highly successful career, first in America and later in Europe. Self-supporting, unmarried, ambitious and energetic, Munger traveled freely, beginning at age thirteen with a move from New Haven to Washington, D.C., where he apprenticed to an engraver for the Smithsonian Institution. He remained in Washington through the Civil War, studying art and painting nearby landscapes on his own. There he paved the way for his first "big break," which came in 1869 with an invitation to paint in the American West with geologist Clarence King's "Survey of the 40th Parallel."

Between 1869 and 1877, Munger established a solid reputation in New York, St. Paul and San Francisco as a skilled painter of landscapes that were both scientifically accurate and aesthetically pleasing. On the advice of English patrons, he relocated to London, where his fame grew even greater. Painting in France in the mid-1880s, Munger successfully negotiated a stylistic transformation, from the distant and detached views of the Hudson River School, to the intimate, moody and emotional style advocated by artists of the Barbizon School. The paintings Munger created in the last decade of his life, after he had returned to America, clearly demonstrate his success at absorbing, mastering, and often surpassing, the stylistic conventions of his day.

With due credit to pioneering essays on Munger by J. Gray Sweeney and Hildegard Cummings, this is the first time that Munger's work and career have been analyzed and contextualized in great detail for modern audiences. Featuring seventy paintings gathered from public and private collections nationwide, the exhibition presents many works never publicly seen, and certainly never before exhibited and published *together* in a way that sheds light on their stylistic development, and places them accurately in the context of American and European-influenced art, social and scientific history. Our sincere thanks go to the individuals and institutions who graciously lent works to the exhibition, to The Henry Luce Foundation, and to Michael D. Schroeder and J. Gray Sweeney, whose extensive monograph so aptly brings those paintings, and their creator, so alive for us.

Peter F. Spooner, Curator

Exhibition Checklist

(All works by Gilbert Davis Munger, unless otherwise indicated. Paintings are listed chronologically within categories. Not all works appear at all venues.)

Early Works: East Coast and Minnesota

1. *Cattle Watering in a Placid River*, 1866, oil on canvas, 14 x 24"
Private Collection
2. *The Great Falls of the Potomac River*, n.d. (ca. 1860-66), oil on canvas, 16 1/2 x 22"
Collection of Alice Jamar Kapla
3. *Mountain Lake Scene*, n.d. (ca. 1860-66), oil on canvas, 17 x 25 1/2"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
4. *Minnehaha Falls*, 1867, oil on board, 17 x 14"
Collection of The Warren Jamar Family



Duluth, Minnesota, 1871, oil on canvas, 25 x 50"; Collection of City of Duluth, Duluth Public Library, Minnesota

Realizing the potential for a railroad and port at the westernmost point accessible to ships from the East, Roger Munger moved to Duluth in 1869, having relocated to St. Paul from Connecticut a decade earlier. He established

some of Duluth's first industries, and assisted in constructing the shipping port and canal on the Minnesota side of the harbor. As he had in St. Paul, Gilbert visited his brother in Duluth, and in 1870-71 he painted two panoramic views of the city and harbor from its hillside. In an effort to convince congress to fund development of the port and connecting railroad, one of the paintings was sent to Washington, D.C., where it was hung in the Wormley Hotel, a popular meeting place for politicians and influential leaders of the day.

5. *Minnehaha Falls*, 1868, oil on canvas, 108 x 72"
Collection of Notre Dame de Namur University, Belmont, CA
6. *Niagara Falls*, 1870, oil on canvas, 25 x 36"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey
7. *River Scene*, 1870, oil on board, 7 x 5 1/4"
Private Collection
8. *Duluth, Minnesota, 1871, oil on canvas, 25 x 50"*
Collection of City of Duluth, Duluth Public Library, Minnesota

Carleton Watkins, Clarence King, Frederick Clark and Gilbert Munger at Mt. Shasta Camp, photograph, 1870. Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University

One of Munger's early career "breaks" was his association with geologist Clarence King, who later became director of the U.S. Geological Survey. Munger's participation in King's famous "Survey of the 40th Parallel" is documented in the diaries of the party's second-in-command, Samuel Franklin Emmons. Munger's travels with King gave him access to stunning mountain scenes in Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada and Utah, ten of



which were used as illustrations in King's Systematic Geology, the most important publication of the time on the geology of the American West. Photographers as well as painters were increasingly employed to provide important documentation of Western exploration. During his Western sojourns, Munger is known to have traveled with the photographers Timothy O'Sullivan, Andrew Russell, Carleton Watkins and Charles Savage. Comparison with their works attest to the geological and topographical accuracy of Munger's Western paintings.

Artist-Explorer of the West

9. *Lake Lal and Mt. Agassiz, Unita Range, Utah*, n.d. (ca. 1869); oil on canvas, 18 x 30"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in Memory of Robert S. Orcutt
10. *Mt. Tamalpais from San Raphael*, 1870, oil on canvas, 30 x 57"
Collection of Alfred Goldyne
11. *Mt. Tamalpais from San Raphael*, n.d. (ca. 1870), oil on canvas, 19 1/2 x 33 1/2"
Private Collection
12. *Mt. Shasta*, (ca. 1870), oil on canvas, 19 x 34 1/2"
Private Collection
13. *Mt. Hood from Hood River*, n.d. (ca. 1870), oil on canvas, 11 x 22"
Private Collection
14. *Yosemite Valley from Old Inspiration Point*, n.d. (ca. 1870), oil on canvas on board, 16 x 24"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. George C. Rough
15. *View from Inspiration Point, Yosemite*, n.d., oil on canvas on board, 14 x 20"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
16. *Glimpse of the Pacific*, 1870-71, oil on canvas, 24 x 42"
Collection of Heidi and Ward Carey
17. *Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo*, n.d. (ca. 1870-73), oil on paper on canvas, 14 x 20"; Collection of Arthur J. Phelan
18. *Yosemite Valley from a Cliff*, n.d. (ca. 1870-75) , oil on cardboard, 27 x 19 1/2"
Collection of Eldon and Susan Grupp
19. *The High Waterfall, Yosemite*, n.d. (ca. 1870-75) , oil on cardboard, 27 x 19 1/2"
Collection of Eldon and Susan Grupp
20. *Redwood (Sequoia) Forest*, n.d. (ca. 1870-75) , oil on cardboard, 27 x 19 1/2"
Collection of SBC Communications, Inc.
21. *Yosemite Valley*, n.d. (ca. 1870s) , oil on canvas, 28 x 48"
Collection of Nick and Mary Alexander
22. *Golden Gate*, 1871, oil on canvas, 18 x 33 1/2"
Private Collection
23. *Lake Marian, Humboldt Range, Nevada*, 1871, oil on canvas, 26 x 44"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Pollack
24. *Lake Marian, Humboldt Range, Nevada*, 1872, oil on canvas, 17 x 30 1/2"
Collection of St. Louis Historical Society, Duluth, MN
25. *Along the Monterey Peninsula*, 1873, oil on canvas, 13 x 23"
Private Collection
26. *Glacier Lake, King's Canyon, California*, 1876, oil on canvas, 20 x 28"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Davies
27. *Yosemite Valley Scene*, 1876 , oil on canvas, 20 x 28"
Collection of Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA. Museum Donors Acquisition Fund
28. *Royal Arches, Yosemite*, n.d., (ca. 1876), oil on canvas on board, 18 x 31 1/2"
Private Collection



The High Waterfall, Yosemite, n.d. (ca. 1870-75), oil on cardboard, 27 x 19 1/2"; Collection of Eldon and Susan Grupp

One of a pair of vertical paintings, this close-up and cropped-in view of Yosemite's high waterfall stresses its vertical height, placing the viewer quite literally in the scene. This pair of paintings may have been Munger's response to Albert Bierstadt's *Domes of the Yosemite*, which was exhibited to great fanfare in 1867, just as Munger was beginning his career. Munger would later paint with Bierstadt in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

29. *Sunrise, Donner Lake*, n.d. (ca. 1876-77), oil on canvas, 20 x 28"
Private Collection
30. *After the Storm, Utah*, n.d. (ca. 1876-77), oil on canvas, 20 x 28"
Private Collection
31. *Bridal Veil Falls, Yosemite Valley*, 1877, oil on canvas, 20 1/2 x 28 1/2"
Private Collection
32. *The Wasatch Mountains, Salt Lake City and Great Salt Lake*, 1877, oil on canvas, 21 x 44"
Collection of Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
Gift of Kenneth Nebezahl
33. *Great Salt Lake City and The Wasatch Mountains*, n.d. (ca. 1877), oil on paper on canvas, 15 x 25"; Collection of Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Gift of Donald M. Burns
34. - 43. Chromolithographs from *Systematic Geology*, by Clarence King, published 1878, produced from paintings by Gilbert Munger
Natural Column, Washakie Badlands, Wyoming, 6 x 8 1/2"
Summits, Wasatch Range, Utah, 6 x 8 1/2"
Lake Marian, Humboldt Range, Nevada, 6 x 8 1/2"
Canon of Lodore, Unita Range, Colorado, 8 x 6"
Upper Valley of the Bear River, Unita Range, Utah, 6 x 8 1/2"
Lake Lal and Mt. Agassiz, Unita Range, Utah, 4 x 8 1/2"
Eocene Bluffs, Green River, Wyoming, 6 x 8 1/2"
Washakie Badlands, Wyoming, 6 x 8 1/2"
Shoshone Falls, Idaho, 6 x 8 1/2"
Wasatch Range, from Salt Lake City, Utah, 4 x 8 1/2"
Private Collection
44. *Indian Camp at the Base of the Wasatch Range*, 1879, oil on canvas, 24 x 42"
Collection of Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture / Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Spokane

American Artist in Great Britain

45. *Landscape with Hiker and River* (Ben Ledi, near Callander, Perthshire, Scotland), n.d. (ca. 1877-79), oil on canvas on board, 26 1/2 x 42 1/2"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
46. *Mountainous Lake Scene*, n.d. (ca. 1877), oil on canvas, 14 x 24"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in Memory of Robert S. Orcutt
47. *Windsor Castle*, n.d. (ca. 1877-83), watercolor on paper, 14 x 19 1/2"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Gift of Dwight, Henry and Roger Woodbridge
48. *River Scene with Castle*, n.d. (ca. 1877-83), oil on canvas, 18 x 26"
Private Collection
49. *Herring Fleet*, 1879, etching on paper, 7 x 11"
Private Collection



***Windsor Castle*, n.d. (ca. 1877-83), watercolor on paper, 14 x 19 1/2", Tweed Museum of Art; Gift of Gift of Dwight, Henry and Roger Woodbridge**

Moving to London in 1877, Munger befriended John Everett Millais, whose connections in the European art world helped the newly arrived American painter establish himself. In a letter to Samuel Franklin Emmons dated Christmas Day, 1877, Munger wrote "London is pleasant this time

of year for the [art] workers are here, distinguished men whom it is a pleasure to meet. I am getting into quite a literary and artistic circle by degrees, and already feel more at home here than I did in New York." His acceptance, comfort and success in Europe led Munger to remain there for sixteen years.

Paintings of Venice

50. *Venetian Scene*, n.d. (ca. 1882-92), oil on canvas, 40 1/2 x 56"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey
51. *San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice*, n.d. (ca. 1882-92), oil on canvas, 20 x 30"
Collection of Alice Jamar Kapla
52. *Marine, Venice*, n.d. (ca. 1880s), oil on panel, 13 x 16"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Dwight, Henry and Roger Woodbridge

American at Barbizon: Gilbert Munger in France

53. *Untitled (French Etching)*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), etching on paper, 6 1/2 x 4 1/2"
Private Collection
54. *French Forest Scene*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on canvas, 32 x 25 1/2"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
55. *Forest at Fontainebleau*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on canvas, 15 1/2 x 25 1/2"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, by exchange, for a work gifted by Woodbridge Family
56. *On the Seine Near Poissy*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on panel, 15 x 21 1/2"; Private Collection
57. *Reflections on a Lake*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on cradled wood panel, 12 x 18"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
58. *Pond with Trees*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on canvas, 15 x 23 1/2"
Collection of St. Louis County Historical Society, Duluth, MN
59. *Barbizon Landscape*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on canvas, 26 1/2 x 36"
Collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, OH
Gift of Mrs. Robert H. Bishop, Jr. and Mr. Philip Mather
60. *Near Reuilly*, 1889, oil on mahogany panel, 12 x 16"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
61. *Near Ablon*, n.d. (ca. 1886-93), oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 29"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in memory of Robert S. Orcutt
62. *Carnival at Nice*, 1890, oil on cradled panel, 12 x 24"
Collection of William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs.
Gift of Lyman A. Mills to the Louise Crombie Beach Memorial Collection



Fontainebleau (Three Trees), n.d. (ca. 1901), oil on canvas, 28 x 36"; Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey

Munger painted this work in America after sixteen years of living and painting in Europe, and it certainly bears the stamp of the French Barbizon aesthetic. The softness, moodiness and latent emotionalism of the "portraits of trees" and forest interiors painted by Rousseau, Diaz de la Pena, Daubigny and others practitioners of the Barbizon style had a strong effect on all the work Munger produced after the early 1880s.

Return to America: The Late Paintings

63. *Berkeley Springs*, 1894, oil on canvas, 25 x 30"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Lester E. And Ann H. Shervy
64. *Cazenovia Hay Field*, n.d. (ca. 1900), oil on canvas, 17 x 22 1/2"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of the Orcutt Family in Memory of Robert S. Orcutt
65. *Cazenovia Wheat (Corn) Field*, n.d. (ca. 1900), oil on canvas, 34 x 58"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey
66. *Cazenovia Wheat (Corn) Field*, n.d. (ca. 1900), oil on canvas, 30 x 45"
Collection of Alice Jamar Kapla
67. *Cazenovia Old Mill*, 1900, oil on canvas, 44 x 36"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey
68. *Pastoral Scene at Fontainebleau*, 1900, oil on linen, 20 x 30"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey
69. *Fontainebleau (Three Trees)*, n.d. (ca. 1901), oil on canvas, 28 x 36"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Melville Silvey
70. *Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1901, oil on panel, 11 x 15 1/2"
Collection of St. Louis County Historical Society, Duluth, MN
71. *Two Trees*, 1901, oil on canvas, 44 x 36"
Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, Gift of Pilgrim Congregational Church, Duluth, MN
72. *Niagara Falls*, n.d. (ca. 1900-1903), oil on canvas, 29 1/2 x 48"
Collection of Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagarstown, MD.
Gift of Walter W. Patten, Jr., in honor of Mrs. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy
73. *Niagara Falls*, 1902-03, oil on canvas, 72 x 103"
Collection of Michael F. McNutt

Related Photographs and Objects

- Andrew J. Russell, *Camp in Uinta Mountains, Utah*, photograph, 1869
(enlargement of original photograph) Courtesy of Union Pacific Railroad Museum, Omaha, NE
- Carleton Watkins, *Clarence King, Frederick Clark and Gilbert Munger at Mt. Shasta Camp*, photograph, 1870 (enlargement of original photograph) Courtesy of Stanford University, CA
- Clarence King, *Systematic Geology*, Vol. 1, published 1878, with ten chromolithographs after paintings by Gilbert Munger Collection of Michael D. Schroeder
- Unknown Photographer, *Formal Studio Portrait of Gilbert Munger*, from article published in *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*, London, 1880
(enlargement of original photograph) Courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- Honorary Medals bestowed upon Gilbert Munger, 1880-90, in red leather, velvet and sateen case, with text. Collection of Alice Jamar Kapla. Promised Gift to Tweed Museum of Art.
- Massimiliano Contini (Italian, born ca. 1850)
Bust Portrait of Gilbert Munger, 1891, cast bronze, 21 x 13 x 9"
Collection of St. Louis Historical Society, Duluth, MN
- Memoir: Gilbert Munger, Landscape Artist, 1836 (sic)-1903, New York: DeVinne Press, 1904. Two originals, one with an inscription, of a book compiled by James Cresap Sprigg; 21 pages, 7 illustrations. Collection of Michael D. Schroeder / Collection of Tweed Museum of Art
- Unknown Photographer, Nice, France, *Formal Studio Portrait of Gilbert Munger*, 1890
Published in Memoir: Gilbert Munger, Landscape Artist, 1836 (sic)-1903, New York: De Vinne Press, 1904. (enlargement of original photograph) Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth



Munger Gravesite, Forest Hill Cemetery, Duluth, MN

When Gilbert Munger died in 1903 his brother Roger brought his body to Duluth for burial in the family plot. Having moved from their Connecticut birthplace to Minnesota in 1859, Roger and Russell Munger unwittingly set into motion the chain of events that caused the largest known body of their brother's work to be deposited at the Tweed Museum of Art in Duluth. Gilbert Munger

never married, and when his brother settled his estate, many paintings came from Washington, D.C. to Duluth. Descendants of Roger and Russell Munger had the foresight to preserve Gilbert's paintings, many of which were donated to the museum.

Lenders to the Exhibition:

Nick and Mary Alexander
The William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs
Mr. and Mrs. Ward Carey
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Davies
City of Duluth, Duluth Public Library, MN
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Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagarstown, MD

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