



Redefining Gender in American Impressionist Studio Paintings

Work Place/Domestic Space

Kirstin Ringelberg, *Elon University, USA*



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Were late nineteenth-century gender boundaries as restrictive as is generally held? In *Redefining Gender in American Impressionist Studio Paintings: Work Place/Domestic Space*, Kirstin Ringelberg argues that it is time to bring the current re-evaluation of the notion of separate spheres to these images. Focusing on studio paintings by American artists William Merritt Chase and Mary Fairchild MacMonnies Low, she explores how the home-based painting studio existed outside of entrenched gendered divisions of public and private space and argues that representations of these studios are at odds with standard perceptions of the images, their creators, and the concept of gender in the nineteenth century.

Unlike most of their bourgeois contemporaries, Gilded Age artists, whether male or female, often melded the worlds of work and home. Through analysis of both paintings and literature of the time, Ringelberg reveals how art history continues to support a false dichotomy; that, in fact, paintings that show women negotiating a complex combination of professionalism and domesticity are still overlooked in favor of those that emphasize women as decorative objects. *Redefining Gender in American Impressionist Studio Paintings* challenges the dominant interpretation of American (and European) Impressionism, and considers both men and women artists as active performers of multivalent identities.

Contents

Introduction: the studio, the domestic interior and the ideology of separate spheres; Working men and leisurely ladies: tropes of gender and the artist's studio in the late 19th century; 'The prince of the atelier': negotiating effeminacy in *A Friendly Call* by William Merritt Chase; 'The painter will not sink into the mother': Mary Fairchild's nursery/studio; *Rendering invisible by display*: representations of late 19th-century American women; Epilogue; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

Kirstin Ringelberg is an Associate Professor of Art History at Elon University, USA, where she also contributes to the Women's and Gender Studies, American Studies, and Asian Studies programs.

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