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In *The Palisades*, George Bellows turns from the urbanization around him to depict the beauty of nature and humanity's welcoming enjoyment of it.

Enjoying a Wintry Park

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

The view of the Hudson River pictured in George Bellows's *The Palisades* looks west from Riverside Park in Manhattan toward the cliffs known as the Palisades of New Jersey. A generation after the Hudson River School, landscape painters remain fascinated by the beauty of the mighty river that inspired that first important movement in American art.

This winterscape contrasts the snowy terrain of the park as it descends to the river with the deep blue cold water and the strong dark cliffs on the other bank. The center of the composition draws our attention with the complimentary colors of blue and orange. Sometime after the snow has begun to melt, revealing the brown of the dormant grass, the temperature has dropped to keep the snow frozen—a common wintertime occurrence in this area. Such a cold morning with sunshine is a popular time to get outside and walk. Two gentlemen are visible strolling in top hat and outer coat. The benches and street lamp create a characteristic New York City park environment.

George Bellows remarked in January 1914, "I must always paint snow at least once a year."[†] His compulsion to paint winter landscapes may have served as a break from the gritty urban themes that he is best known for painting. Bellows was a member of a group of painters dubbed the "Ashcan School" because their work typically depicts with uncompromising realism New York City life and American society more generally. He painted middle-class people walking in Central Park, poor urban children playing in the City's streets, and prizefighters from the gym located across the street from his studio. The artist, who was born to conservative Methodist parents in Columbus, OH, attended Ohio State University from 1901-1904, but left for New York City before graduation to play semi-professional baseball and study art with Robert Henri in the New York School of Art.

In this image we see Bellows, like Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand before him, turning from the urbanization occurring around him to a more pure landscape tradition that emphasized the beauty of God's creation and humanity's welcoming enjoyment of it.

NOTES

[†] For more on Georges Bellows and *The Palisades*, see [collections.terraamericanart.org/view/people/asitem/items\\$0040null:135/0](http://collections.terraamericanart.org/view/people/asitem/items$0040null:135/0) (accessed June 6, 2012).