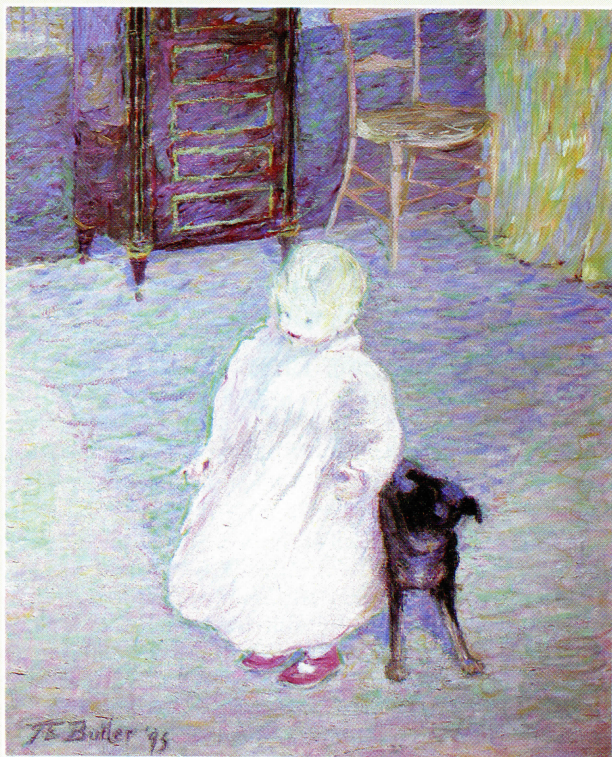


Theodore Earl Butler:

Emergence from Monet's Shadow



Participating Institutions

R. H. Love Galleries, Inc., Chicago, IL
Fine Arts Museum of the South at Mobile, AL
Cummer Gallery of Art, Jacksonville, FL
Museum of Fine Arts of St. Petersburg, FL
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Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, TN
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
Oklahoma Museum of Art, Oklahoma City, OK
University of Wyoming Art Museum, Laramie, WY
Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, MO

Exhibition Organized By

R. H. Love Galleries, Inc., Chicago



Theodore Earl Butler (1861-1936)
Photograph courtesy of the descendants
of Theodore Earl Butler

Theodore Earl Butler (1861-1936)

Born in 1861, Theodore Earl Butler grew up in the family of an influential businessman in Columbus, Ohio. Butler graduated from Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, in 1882 and enrolled at the Art Students' League in New York by late fall of 1883. After years with the League, he went to Paris in January 1887 and plunged into artistic studies at the Julian, Colarossi, and La Grande Chaumière academies. Among Butler's fellow students at Julian's were Paul Sérusier, Pierre Bonnard, and other future leaders of the postimpressionist Nabi group. Inspired by Puvis de Chavannes and the general trends of symbolist thought, Butler and his fellow students approached modern artistic concepts, notably *synthesis*. Enrolling in the influential private atelier of Carolus-Duran, Butler painted *La Veuve (The Widow)* under the master's tutelage and won an honorable mention for it in the Paris Salon of 1888. Fresh with success, in May 1888 Butler and Theodore Wendel visited the picturesque village of Giverny which had been the home of Claude Monet since 1883. With the arrival of pioneering young American artists, this village became an impressionist haven. Meanwhile, Butler's former classmates Sérusier, Bonnard, and others learned the principles of a counter-impressionist synthetist style which Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard had formulated in Pont-Aven.

In the fall of 1888 Butler and Robinson returned to America, where Butler exhibited his prize-winning Salon picture at the National Academy annual. Butler went back to Giverny one year later and in 1892 married Monet's stepdaughter, Suzanne Hoschedé. Following the birth of their children James and Lili in 1893 and 1894, Butler reached the peak of his creativity as the dormant influences of synthesism were awakened in his genre pictures. Choosing Suzanne, her sister Marthe, and his children as

his favorite subject matter, Butler painted genre works in a style far more advanced than anything achieved so far in France and America. Unlike the Nabi group, whose exploitations of Gauguin's synthetism or Bernard's cloisonnism resulted in dark palettes, decorative planes, patterns, textures, and outlines, Butler took some of the same ideas but also added the features of impressionism he had learned from Monet. Butler's beautiful postimpressionist statements were superior to Nabi works. Having shared many influences with the Nabis at Julian's, Butler produced canvases that were mutual in concepts with their art. Butler's canvases show high-key color, scintillating surfaces, forms outlined in yellow and acid green, a harmonious balancing of texture and plane, and complexity of design, subtly disguised in a simplistic pictorial ensemble. Like the Nabis, Butler concentrated on intimate interior subjects, presenting his genre with tenderness and sensitivity in the American genteel tradition and including some of the most avant-garde principles of late nineteenth-century Parisian painting. Butler became a forerunner of intimism. In his baby-bathing series of 1893-1895 Butler demonstrated personal liberation from Monet's influence. Butler exhibited this series at Le Barc de Boutteville shows in the mid-1890s when the Nabis received their first exposure.

Butler produced his masterpiece *The Artist's Children, James and Lili* in 1896. Showing a new style of bold, highly saturated color, he painted *Family Scene, Giverny* in 1897. This work and others anticipated the colorful style of the Fauves. Butler was given a solo show at the prestigious Vollard Gallery in the same year, two years after Cézanne's exhibition there. The Le Barc de Boutteville and Vollard shows made Butler America's foremost postimpressionist. However, as an American he suffered critical rejection at the hands of an elitist group of critics who promoted the Nabis.

After Suzanne's death in 1899, Butler lost his interest in genre subjects. Visiting America shortly afterwards, he executed the *East River* and *Brooklyn Bridge* pictures, which were exhibited to critical acclaim at the prestigious Durand-Ruel Gallery in 1900. After his return to



The Artist's Children, James and Lili
also titled: **Two Children With A Hoop**
Oil on canvas 46 x 46 inches
Signed and dated, 1896: lower left
Private Collection



Brooklyn Bridge
Oil on canvas: 30 x 40 inches
Signed and dated, '00: lower left
Mr. and Mrs. Borje Vagenius Collection

Giverny, Butler married Suzanne's sister, Marthe. He feverishly continued to pursue his new landscape style, revealing a liberal use of color and virtuoso brushwork. His works were exhibited at prestigious galleries in Paris and Berlin in the decade preceding World War I. During this time Butler expanded his landscape style from the restrictive formula of impressionism to a powerful energetic style which anticipated not only some of Monet's work but again prophesied features of Fauvism in high color, fluid line, and free brushstrokes. Butler began to exhibit regularly at the Salon d'Automne in 1906 after Henri Matisse and his rebels had shocked Paris with their unbridled color. Like them, Butler showed dexterity and freedom of expression in his local motifs as he became a frequent exhibitor at the Société des Artistes Indépendants. In 1911 Butler, commissioned by the American government, executed an extensive series of murals of famous Americans for the American Pavilion at the International Exposition held in Turin, Italy, in the same year. He was given complete freedom in the execution of the panels.

In 1913 Butler, followed later by his family, returned to America to install the murals he had taken over from the ailing James Wall Finn in Giverny. The murals were intended for the mansion of financier William A. Paine in White Plains, New York. Butler arrived barely in time to have his works included in the revolutionary Armory Show of 1913. His one-man show at the Durand-Ruel Galleries in Paris in the same year received favorable attention from the critics. However, the outbreak of World War I prevented the Butlers from returning to France.

After exhibiting with his son James in Columbus, Ohio, in 1914, Butler again showed there at the Ohio Painters Exhibition in 1915. He also participated in the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in 1915. However, his involvement with the murals for the famous mansions of Cornelius Vanderbilt III and Solomon R. Guggenheim kept him away from painting and other annual shows in 1915-16. From the wartime years of 1917-18 stem Butler's canvases of flag day celebrations, revealing dynamic brushwork,

expressive imagery, and symbolic treatment. Notable is his *Armistice, Times Square, Broadway, 1918* as a night scene.

Expanding his circle of friends in New York, Butler found an individualist friend in John Sloan. Along with Sloan, Butler became involved in the newly organized Society of Independent Artists. Contributing his French experience, Butler was elected to its board of directors by 1918. His election to the board by a membership vote marked Butler's renown among American artists. He served later as vice-president and successfully exhibited at the annuals of the Society.

After his return to Giverny from America in 1921, Butler discovered a new avant-garde art community in France and reverted to traditional impressionism, showing innovation in his brushwork and stressing the decorative aspects of his style and rich pigment surface. In the decorative ensembles, Butler gave up balancing of geometric and organic components in favor of rhythmic and lyrical design approaching abstraction. He lost Marthe in 1925, the year before Monet died. Exhibiting with the Société des Artistes Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne, Butler continued to live and paint in Giverny until his death in 1936.

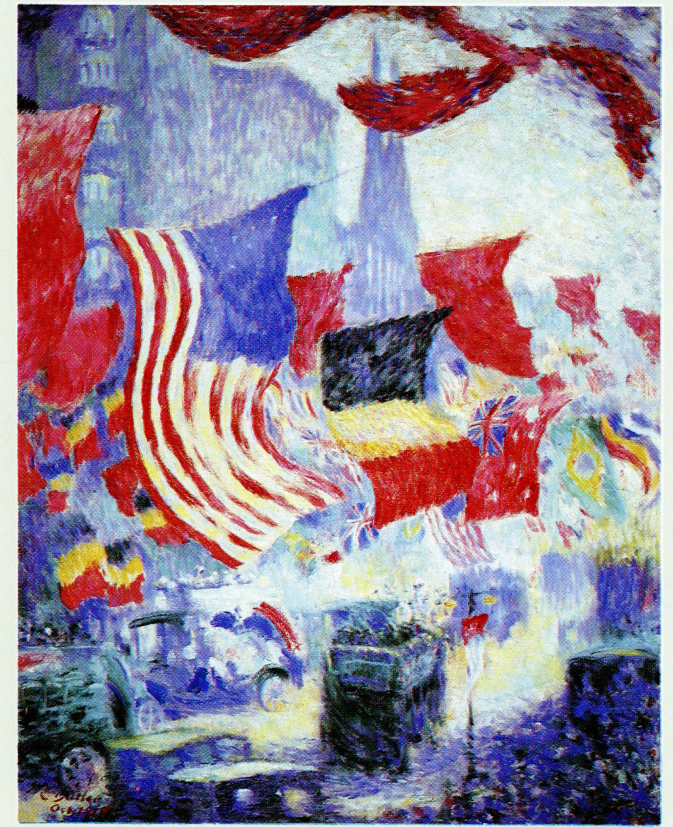
Limited exposure in the United States, combined with anti-American sentiment in France, prevented Theodore Earl Butler from gaining the recognition he deserved in his own time. Art-historical hero worship, until recently, kept him in the shadow of his famous father-in-law. It cannot be denied that Claude Monet was an influence on Butler, but the master's work served only as a foundation of Butler's own excursion into the latest modern trends of the times. Monet's influence permeated the work of most painters of Butler's generation. Ironically, Butler took his impressionism farther afield than any of the pioneers with whom he discovered Giverny, but his amazingly advanced innovation, which made him a leader of American postimpressionism, was ignored by French critics and overlooked by Americans. With this exhibit and the accompanying book, Butler stands upright as a pioneer of American impressionism, foremost postimpressionist, and prophetic landscapist.



The New Road, Giverny
Oil on canvas: 15½ x 32 inches
Signed: lower right
Date: 1902
Warren P. Snyder Collection

Theodore Earl Butler, Chronology

- 1861** Born on 12 October to Courtland Philip Livingston Butler and Elizabeth S. Perce Butler.
- 1879** Enters Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio, as a sophomore.
- 1882** Graduates from Marietta College on 28 June. Takes a job in Columbus, Ohio, as a clerk in a wholesale store in the fall.
- 1883** Leaves Columbus for New York and begins his studies at the Art Students' League.
- 1885** Butler lists his address as 58 W. 57th St., New York (Sherwood Studios).
- 1886** Exhibition of French impressionism by Durand-Ruel at the American Art Galleries in New York in April.
- 1887** Butler and Philip Hale arrive in Paris in January. Enrolls at the Julian Academy at midyear. Enters the Colarossi Academy. Attends La Grande Chaumière in late summer. Joins the Studio of Emile Auguste Carolus-Duran in the fall.
- 1888** Exhibits *La Veuve (The Widow)* at the Paris Salon and receives an honorable mention. Exhibits *La Veuve* at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Arrives in Giverny with Theodore Wendel on 20 May. Leaves Hotel Baudy on 7 September and returns to Paris. Robinson and Butler return to New York at approximately the same time.
- 1889** Takes a studio at the University Building in Washington Square, New York City. Exhibits *La Veuve (The Widow)* at the National Academy of Design. Exhibits at the Society of American Painters in Pastel.
- 1890** Returns to Giverny and becomes acquainted with Lilla Cabot Perry and her husband. Exhibits at the 60th Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Exhibits at the Society of American Artists. Returns to Paris in the fall.
- 1890-1891** Returns to America probably at the request of his ailing father who dies in the summer of 1891.
- 1891** Exhibits with the Society of American Artists. Returns to Giverny on 7 October. Paints his earliest known impressionistic landscapes.
- Winter** Courts Suzanne Hoschedé.
- 1891-1892** Changes subject matter from landscape to genre.
- 1892** Monet marries Alice Hoschedé. Butler marries Suzanne Hoschedé on 20 July.
- 1893** Son James P. Butler is born.
- 1893-1895** Paints baby-bathing series. Makes further stylistic advancements.
- 1894** Daughter Lili Butler is born. Exhibits at the 7th Le Barc de Boutteville Show with the Nabi group in July and again at the 8th in November-December.
- 1895** Completes new house in Giverny. Makes further stylistic advancements.
- 1896** Paints his masterpiece *The Artist's Children, James and Lili*. Exhibits at the Art Loan Exhibition, Columbus, Ohio.
- 1897** First one-man exhibition: Galerie Volland, Paris. Major style change that anticipates some aspects of Fauvism. Does little painting because of Suzanne's worsening health.
- 1899** Butler's wife Suzanne dies. Leaves for America in September with Marthe Hoschedé to care for the children.
- 1899-1900** Paints *East River, Brooklyn Bridge*, and *Statue of Liberty*.
- 1900** One-man exhibition: Durand-Ruel, New York. Returns with family to Giverny. Marries Marthe Hoschedé on 31 October. Works diligently in pursuit of a new landscape style.
- 1902** One-man exhibition: Moline Gallery, Paris.
- 1903-1933** Exhibits annually with the Société des Artistes Indépendants except 1912 through 1921 while in America.
- 1904** One-man exhibition: Galerie Thomas, Paris. Exhibits at the 73rd Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- 1905** The Fauves gain prominence at the Salon d'Automne.
- 1906-1935** Exhibits annually at the Salon d'Automne with the exception of his years in America and 1932.
- 1906** Exhibits at the 101st Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. One-man exhibition: Eduard Schulte Salon, Berlin. One-man exhibition: Kunstverein Gallery, Hamburg.
- 1907** One-man exhibition: Galerie LeGrip, Rouen. Exhibits at the 102nd Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Exhibits at the Gallery of Fine Arts Show, Columbus, Ohio.
- 1908** Exhibits at the 103rd Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- 1909** One-man exhibitions: Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, March 8-20 and again December 13-18.
- 1911** Commissioned by the American government, travels to Turin, Italy, and paints murals for the American pavilion at the International Exposition of Turin. Returns to Giverny with family. Exhibits at the 106th Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- 1912** Accepts commission to complete 13 of 15 mural panels begun by the ailing James Wall Finn. One-man exhibition: Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris.
- 1913** Sails to New York for installation of mural panels in the mansion of William A. Paine near White Plains, New York. Group exhibition: Armory Show, New York, Boston, and Chicago. One-man exhibition: Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris. Exhibits at the 108th Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- 1914** Remains in New York due to the outbreak of World War I. Two-man exhibition with James P. Butler at the Columbus Art School, Columbus, Ohio.
- 1915** Exhibits at the Ohio Painters Exhibition, Columbus, Ohio. Exhibits at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco.
- 1915-1916** Executes murals in the mansion of Cornelius Vanderbilt III in New York.
- 1916** Executes murals in the summer mansion of Solomon R. Guggenheim in Long Branch, New Jersey.
- 1917** Participates with John Sloan in the organizational work of the Society of Independent Artists. One-man exhibition: Kraushaar Gallery, New York. Exhibits at the 112th Annual of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- 1917-1923** Exhibits annually with the Society of Independent Artists, New York.
- 1918-1921** Elected to the board of directors of the Society of Independent Artists.
- 1920-1921** Serves as vice-president of the Society of Independent Artists.
- 1921** One-man exhibition: Schwartz Galleries, New York. Butler family returns to Giverny.
- 1925** Death of Marthe Butler.
- 1926** Death of Claude Monet.
- 1936** Death of Theodore Earl Butler in Giverny on 2 May.



above: **Flag Day**
oil on canvas: 39½ x 31¾ inches
signed, dated 1918: lower left
Tom Snyder Collection

opposite: **Jimmy Butler and His Dog**
oil on canvas: 42½ x 34½ inches
signed, dated '95: lower left
Liautaud Collection

List of Works

Numbers 1-33 by Theodore Earl Butler

1. **Old Bearded Man (after Velasquez)**
Oil on canvas: 29½ x 19¾ inches
Inscribed and dated, 1885: reverse
Maxwell Galleries, San Francisco
2. **Youth**
Oil on canvas: 20 x 16 inches
Signed and dated, 1887: lower left
R. H. Love Galleries, Inc., Chicago
3. **Bathing the Child**
Oil on canvas: 19½ x 24 inches
Unsigned, circa 1893
Janet Fleisher Gallery, Philadelphia
4. **Le Bain, Maison Baptiste**
Oil on canvas: 25½ x 32 inches
Signed and dated, '94: lower right
Richard Smart Collection
5. **Jimmie Butler and His Dog**
Oil on canvas: 42½ x 34½ inches
Signed and dated, '95: lower left
Liautaud Collection
6. **The Artist's Children, James and Lili**
also titled: Two Children With a Hoop
Oil on canvas: 46 x 46 inches
Signed and dated, 1896: lower left
Private Collection
7. **Le Déjeuner**
Oil on canvas: 21½ x 25½ inches
Signed and dated, '97: lower right
Janet Fleisher Gallery, Philadelphia
8. **Portrait of William Hart**
Oil on canvas: 32 x 24 inches
Signed: lower right
Dated (on reverse): 1897
R. H. Love Galleries, Inc., Chicago
9. **Little Girl With a Doll**
Pastel on paper: 21¾ x 16⅞ inches
Unsigned
Governor and Mrs. James R. Thompson Collection
10. **Brooklyn Bridge**
Oil on canvas: 30 x 40 inches
Signed and dated, '00: lower left
Mr. and Mrs. Borje Vagenius Collection
11. **East River**
Oil on canvas: 30 x 40 inches
Signed and dated, '00: lower right
Tom Snyder Collection
12. **The New Road, Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 25½ x 32 inches
Signed: lower right
Date: 1902
Warren P. Snyder Collection
13. **Schoolhouse in the Snow**
Oil on canvas: 25¾ x 31½ inches
Signed and dated, '03: lower right
Dr. and Mrs. Charles Cavallo Collection
14. **Valley at Giverny, the Old Mill**
Oil on canvas: 25½ x 31½ inches
Signed and dated, '03: lower left
Tom Snyder Collection
15. **Church at Vernon**
Oil on canvas: 32 x 25½ inches
Signed and dated, '06: lower left
Tom Snyder Collection
16. **Mill in the Snow**
Oil on canvas: 23 x 28½ inches
Signed and dated, '06: lower left
Mr. and Mrs. A. I. Appleton, Jr. Collection
17. **Church at Vernon**
Oil on canvas: 32 x 25¾ inches
Signed: lower right
Tom Snyder Collection

18. **Vernon Church**
Oil on canvas: 32 x 25 inches
Signed and dated, '09: lower left
Tom Snyder Collection
19. **Spruce, Poplars and Rainbow, Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 25½ x 31¾ inches
Signed and dated, 1910: lower right
Tom Snyder Collection
20. **The Mill in the Flood**
Oil on canvas: 23½ x 26 inches
Signed and dated, '10: lower right
Tom Snyder Collection
21. **Giverny Church, Sunset**
Oil on canvas: 25¾ x 31¾ inches
Signed: lower right
Warren P. Snyder Collection
22. **Sunset, Giverny Church**
Oil on canvas: 23¾ x 31¾ inches
Signed: lower right
Warren P. Snyder Collection
23. **Sunset, Church of Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 24¾ x 28½ inches
Signed and dated, '10: lower right
Private Collection
24. **Woman with a Rose**
Oil on canvas: 32 x 32 inches
Signed and dated, '10: lower right
Private Collection
25. **Les Deserts, Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 25½ x 32 inches
Signed and dated, 1912: lower right
Kersen J. DeJong Collection
26. **The Wind and Sun**
Oil on canvas: 19 x 29 inches
Signed: lower right
Date: circa 1913
Tom Snyder Collection
27. **Cottage at Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 23½ x 29 inches
Signed and dated, '07: lower right
Tom Snyder Collection
28. **Flag Day**
Oil on canvas: 39½ x 31¾ inches
Signed and dated, Oct. 1918: lower left
Tom Snyder Collection
29. **Poplars, Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 21½ x 25¾ inches
Signed and dated, '26: lower right
Warren P. Snyder Collection
30. **Chateau Gaillard**
Oil on canvas: 25½ x 32 inches
Signed and dated, '23: lower right
Tom Snyder Collection
31. **Garden in Giverny**
Oil on canvas: 28½ x 19 inches
Signed and dated, '26: lower right
Warren P. Snyder Collection
32. **Sweet Peas on the Lawn**
Oil on canvas: 28 x 18 inches
Signed: lower right
Date: circa 1928
Tom Snyder Collection
33. **Place du Havre**
Oil on canvas: 26 x 21 inches
Signed: lower right
Date: 1909
Watson and Harrison Collection
34. **Portrait of T. E. Butler**
by William Hart
Oil on canvas: 22 x 18 inches
Unsigned
Maxwell Galleries, San Francisco