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FITZ HENRY LANE AND MAXIM AND MARTHA KAROLIK: A TALE OF TWO LOVE STORIES LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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Video Description

Held at Gloucester City Hall, this is the first in a series of three guest lectures presented to coincide with *Fitz Henry Lane and Mary Blood Mellen: Old Mysteries and New Discoveries*, an exhibition offered at the Cape Ann Museum from July 7,

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2007, through September 16, 2007. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, curator Carol Troyen speaks about the husband and wife collecting team of Maxim and Martha Karolik in terms of their focus on many previously ignored chapters in American fine and decorative arts. In particular, Troyen discusses the Karoliks' part in the quiet rediscovery of 19th century artists such as Fitz Henry Lane and Martin Johnson Heade in light of the prevailing cultural moods of the first half of the 20th century. Along with their particular interest in self-taught artists with modest reputations, the Karoliks' commitment of over 2,000 objects to the MFA's collections has helped to build critical acclaim for several subsets of American art.

Subject list

Martha Karolik	Oak Hill Period Rooms, MFA Boston
Maxim Karolik	Colonial Revival
Fitz Henry Lane	American Romanticism
Martin Johnson Heade	American Regionalism
Alfred Mansfield Brooks	<i>Lane Lecture Series</i>
Carol Troyen	

Transcription

00:16 John Cunningham

Welcome to this first lecture in a series of three presented by the Cape Ann Historical Museum in connection with our newly opened exhibition, *Fitz Henry Lane and Mary Blood Mellen: Old Mysteries and New Discoveries*, which is a special exhibition highlighting the work of Gloucester's native son, Fitz Henry Lane, and his most famous student Mary Blood Mellen. This exhibition was curated by Lane scholar John Wilmerding. And in addition to a large number of the Museum's paintings, it features works that are on loan from distinguished institutions including the Museum Fine Arts in Boston, the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the Farnsworth Museum.

01:09

This is a very important exhibition for the Museum and for the city of Gloucester. Unlike many of the artists who worked on Cape Ann, Lane was born here and painted primarily in Gloucester. Most of his work depicts images of Gloucester. It's also important, and lucky for us, that a great number of his works remained in Gloucester. City Hall seems to be a very fitting

venue for a lecture series about his life and work. The exhibition continues in Gloucester through September 16 and then reopens at the Spanierman Gallery in New York City in October. If you've not yet seen the show, I hope that you will, and I hope you'll bring your friends.

02:05

There are also a number of programs and events planned around the exhibition. There are two more lectures in this series. The second is on Sunday, August 12. And then the last on Thursday, August 23, here in City Hall. And tomorrow at 10:00 am and on Saturday at 9:00 am, there's a narrated walk through Lane's Gloucester. And information on all these events is available in the pamphlet that was available at the desk. If you don't have one, there are more on your way out. In addition, there's a copy, copies of a very fine catalog created for this exhibition, which is also available for purchase. We're very grateful to our local sponsors, Gorton's Seafood, the Cape Ann Savings Bank, and Varian, for their support of this exhibition and the related events.

03:09

As always, it's a pleasure to have Carol Troyen with us in Gloucester again. Carol is a distinguished curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. She's had an exceptional career as a curator, an educator, a scholar, and a writer. And, in slight competition to our exhibition, there's an exhibition of Hopper paintings at the MFA, which I hope you'll all go to as well. It's really exquisite. Carol's talk entitled "Fitz Henry Lane and Maxim and Martha Karolik: A Tale of Two Love Stories" will provide some insights into the work, into the lives of Maxim and Martha Karolik, one of the first collectors of Fitz Henry Lane paintings. Carol, thanks very much for being with us.

(Applause)

04:11 Carol Troyen

Thank you very much, what a wonderful warm introduction. Not even my husband says such nice things about me. It's really nice to be here. And you'll have to forgive me if I say Hopper when I mean Lane, I have been in the 20th century for most of the last year. But I'll try to step back into the 19th and share with you the story of two of the most adventurous collectors of American Art in the 20th century, and one of the artists they loved most of all. And what I'm going to do is try to tell you the story of why the collectors bought what they did, the context for their enthusiasm in terms of the cultural and political events of the day. But the background is also in their own histories, so stay tuned. And, lights please. Perfect, thank you. Here are two—does this turn?

05:11

See if I can move it, good. Thank you, now I can see you and them. These are two of the three heroes of this talk. On the right is Maxim Karolik as a young man, probably shortly after he immigrated from Russia in 1922. He was about 29 at the time. He was born in 1893 of Orthodox Jewish parents in Romania. He went to Russia to be trained in music at the St. Petersburg

Conservatory. And then he left to pursue his career and to avoid the aftermaths of the revolution. On the left is Martha Karolik, who was at that time Miss Codman, at about the turn of the century. She's about 40. She was a descendant of the Amory, Codman, Pickman, and Derby families. She was one of richest women in Boston and a great collector in her own right. They met about 1927 when Karolik, who was trained as I said as a concert tenor and made a living performing at evening entertainments, in other words he was kind of a singing waiter, he performed at a dinner party in her mansion in Washington, D.C. He sang, she swooned, and shortly after, they were married, despite the difference in their social backgrounds and in their ages. He was 35 and she was 70 at the time.

(Laughter)

06:39

I'm not making this up. Her family, reluctant to forgive what one biographer called "an outrageous prank of Cupid," exiled the couple to Europe for a year. Behind his back they called Maxim "the musical bridegroom." We have a letter that Martha wrote to her Aunt Mary Codman pleading for the family to accept her new husband, and it was a poignant letter, and I'm going to read you a bit of it. "Now I'm going to tell you an important piece of news. I expect to be married in a few weeks, and I think it is my duty as well as my pleasure to let you know beforehand, although I am keeping it a secret until after the ceremony, because of the newspapers such as Town Topics and The Mirror, of which I've already had a taste. The man is a Russian named Maxim Karolik. I met him in Washington a year ago. He was at my house almost every day, and when I went to Newport, he was my guest all summer. Having lived under my roof for more than five months, I can say that I know him thoroughly. He is a gentleman to his fingertips, has a wonderful mind, a lovely disposition, and is a splendid singer."

07:55

Not so splendid, but never mind.

07:57

"Of course, I know what people will say, but I am determined not to pay any attention to that, but get all the happiness and pleasure out of what remains to me of life. No matter what they think, or say, they will, I am sure, gladly come to my dinners and musical entertainments. You, Dear Aunt Mary, being a woman of the world and having such splendid courage will, I'm sure, understand my point of view."

08:22

Well, Aunt Mary was reassured, but the rest of the family was not. Her wedding gift was the only one the Karoliks received from the family. Ironically, the man they thought of as an upstart adventurer gave the Codman family more distinction than it had achieved in nearly 200 years. This is where they lived happily ever after. Because despite what all of you are thinking, Maxim was a loyal and attentive husband. This is their mansion in Newport called Berkeley Villa on Bellevue Avenue. It's still standing; last time I looked, it was for sale for about a zillion dollars. It

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was designed in 1920 by Martha's cousin, Ogden Codman. It was filled with silver, heirloom furniture, and 20 Siamese cats. As you can see from the photograph of the music room, there are no pictures of great distinction. And there were none in the mansion, and I'll explain why in a little bit.

09:26

Their happy union produced no children, but they did give birth to three collections, all given to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, numbering in total over 200 objects—2,000 objects, excuse me. The first collection was really hers. It was a collection of 18th century American art, some 275 objects, which she gave to the Museum of Fine Arts in 1938. It consisted of paintings, there's Copley's portrait of John Amory on the left, an ancestor of Mrs. Karolik's. There was furniture, silver, glass, needlework, and prints, all from the Colonial Period, and on the left is another example from this collection, an elegant lock-front kneehole bureau table with claw-and-ball feet from about 1750. It was small, delicately proportioned, designed no doubt for a lady. High-style American works, both.

10:30

The second collection consisted of 232 American paintings made between 1815 and 1865. This collection came to the Boston Museum in the late 1940s. Now if the first collection, the 18th century collection, showed life in colonial America at its most elegant, then this second collection showed daily life, however idealized, of Jacksonian America, which found virtues in the buildings, landscape, and among the common people. I'm showing on the left Thomas Cole's *Sunny Morning on the Hudson* of 1827.

11:08

And on the right, Eastman Johnson's *Writing to Father*, of about 1863.

11:15

Pictures like these were the kinds of things that, at least in the 20th century, no one valued before Maxim Karolik did, it was truly a groundbreaking collection. This collection was responsible for the revival of interest in many American painters, Frederick Church, Thomas Cole, Eastman Johnson, once well-known, but for nearly half a century consigned to family attics and museum basements. And some of these, notably Karolik's two absolute favorites, Martin Johnson Heade on the left and Fitz Henry Lane on the right, hadn't made it into museum collections at all.

12:04

Martha Codman died in 1948 at the age of 89. Maxim Karolik went on collecting, ever seeking to honor her memory. The third collection, "completing the trilogy," as he called it, was a collection of watercolors and drawings and folk sculpture, and that came to the MFA Boston in 1962. And here are two examples, on the left, a watercolor representing Washington Irving's home Sunnyside with his two nieces in the foreground by the now much-admired New York Pre-Raphaelite painter John William Hill. We know Hill's name, but that was not critical to

Maxim Karolik, he was equally interested in anonymous artists. He said he had “no special interest in collecting name brands,” and he was fond of saying, “We discarded the motto of a fashionable connoisseur namely, ‘Tell me who the painter is, and I will tell you whether the painting is good.’ Our motto is, ‘Tell me if the painting is good, and I won't care who the painter is.’”

13:10

What sparked the Karolik's interest in American art of the past, the context who they're collecting, especially for Martha's interests in high-style 18th century arts, are to be found in the era just after World War One. This was the Jazz Age, the Machine Age, but it was also the era of the Colonial Revival. The Colonial Revival in turn was part of a larger Americanization movement, born of a resurgence of patriotism, and in fact isolationism, after World War One. This is the period in which presidential candidate Warren G. Harding in 1921 pledged “a return to normalcy,” conjuring up images of a stable homogenous past.

13:58

In all spheres, political, social, and cultural, there was a turning away from international influences in favor of native achievement. And the kind of native achievement considered worthy of celebration was that of the Anglo-Saxon elite. Remember, this was an era of enormous immigration from especially Southern and Eastern Europe, and the passage of restrictive quotas, in an effort to keep America more ethnically pure. So according to those making the rules, America was not to be defined in terms of the aspirations and efforts of those who came, but by those who had been there, the self-appointed descendants of the founding fathers. The goal was homogeneity. And in terms of history, emphasis was squarely on the 18th century, on the colonial.

14:52

Now in this era, the term “colonial” was applied loosely. It was used to indicate not only pre-revolutionary America, but the heroes and styles and events from the William and Mary Period of the 1680s through the Federal Era to the Age of Jackson.

15:10

Manifestations of interest in the colonial past were everywhere. It was apparent in academia, where a new generation of brilliant innovative scholars such as Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard, whose *Rise of American Civilization* appeared in 1927. Scholars such as these reinterpreted the literature and history of Colonial America and the young Republic. Interest in the colonial past was apparent in architecture, where colonial and federal styles were imitated in both domestic and public buildings. So, the Karolik's mansion, Berkeley Villa that I showed you is very much in that traditional that although it was built in the 1820s it looks like it's right out of the 18th century. On the right, I'm showing you Lowell House at Harvard, the Harvard houses were built between 1924 and 1930, in what is often called collegiate Georgian, modeled after esteemed colonial buildings, and in this case, it is Independence Hall in Philadelphia. That

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was the model for Lowell House, and you can see the steepness of each Lowell house mirrored Independence Hall there on the left.

16:24

Interest in the colonial past was apparent in both popular illustration and the fine arts. On the left is the early Norman Rockwell called *Franklin's Belles* and on the right, is Grant Wood's *Parson Weems' Fable* the story of George Washington and Cherry Tree. In both of these cases, episodes, both fictional well actually the Franklin isn't so fictional, episodes from early American history began to appear as subject matter and most interesting of all interests in the colonial past began to appear in museums and the art press, where the arts of this period primarily furniture but paintings as well began to be the subject of some scrutiny. In 1922, for example, the magazine *Antiques* was founded to encourage collecting and serious study of American Art. The same year, the Metropolitan Museum held a Duncan Phyfe exhibition, great furniture maker from New York, was the first American artists to be so honored and these events were a prelude to the opening of the American wing at the Metropolitan Museum in 1924 with period rooms containing, as you can see here from the two examples, American furniture, silver, ceramics, painting, and so forth from the late 17th century to 1825. The wing was meant to demonstrate the richness of America's cultural past and it was believed show America's independence from Europe it was also intended to inspire contemporary artisans. And in all counts, it was successful. The day after the opening of the American wing, New York Times headline said, "American art really exists."

18:19

The 1920s was also the era of a group of super collectors, the first people to collect American art of the past in a big way and these people generated excitement by making big purchases of colonial American art and founding whole museums to show it. John D. Rockefeller, for example, restored Colonial Williamsburg beginning in 1928. Henry Ford bought the wayside in 1923 and restored it and in 1929, he opened Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. These museums with their historic reconstructions were romantic and even rather sanitized recreations of the past and also show how antiques could be related to everyday life. It's fitting that Henry Ford built one of these museums since it was his Model T that enable people to go antiquing on the weekends.

19:15

Now, the greatest of the super collectors of the 20s and 30s, I have two nominees; one was Henry F. Du Pont, whose extraordinary collection of that eventually became the Winterthur Museum in Delaware and on the left, is a spectacularly beautiful Philadelphian, chest on chest, which is one of the masterpiece among masterpieces of Winterthur. My other nominee for the greatest super collector of the 20s was a man named Francis P. Garvan, who was a much more behind the scenes collector. He gave his encyclopedic collection of furniture, pewter, glass, ceramics, ironware prints, paintings, but especially silver like the monteith you see on the right, by the great late 18th century late 17th, early 18th century silversmith John Coney, he gave all,

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Garvan gave all of these things to the Yale University Art Gallery, making it one of the greatest repositories for 18th century American material anywhere.

20:19

Well, Boston super collectors were Martha and Maxim Karolik. They had somewhat different sociological profiles from other collectors, largely because they were so different from one another. She was the blue blood, the assimilator. He was the parliament, the assimilatee. She was the inheritor of property and cash and was imbued with a strong sense of family history, and the importance of the visual arts. Her father J. Amory Codman was a painter, not a very good one, but never mind. This tradition of the visual arts was strong in her family. And Martha interestingly began her collecting by buying back family heirlooms, coercing relatives who had little interest in things to turn them over to her and studying and saving inherited pieces, such as the glorious commode or chest of drawers by Thomas Seymour on the left.

21:20

This piece of furniture had been inherited by one Louisa Lander, the great granddaughter of Salem's richest merchant, at about of about 1800 Elias Hasket Derby. Louisa Lander sold it to Martha, who was also a Derby descendant and Martha used it in her bedroom at Berkeley Villa for many years, and then gave it to the MFA. On the right, is another family portrait of Martha's family. This is *Mrs. John Amory Jr.* by Gilbert Stuart, which a family member own wasn't particularly interested in and so Martha said I'll take it and it ended up in her house and then on the walls of the Museum of Fine Arts. Martha's initial interest was both decorator-ish and archival. She was attracted to things because they would be handsome appointments in our home, and because they were artifacts of a seemingly pleasanter time.

22:19

Soon, however, she developed a sense of civic responsibility. In 1922, she helped the Museum of Fine Arts purchased the Oak Hill rooms, and I'm showing you two of them here, the parlor on the left and the bedroom on the right. These were designed by the noted architects Samuel McIntire in 1801 for Elias Hasket Derby, the same man who owned the piece of furniture you saw a few minutes ago. Martha's interest in these rooms was her first step in becoming a significant collector. The second was her marriage to Maxim, who encouraged her to expand her activities beyond buying family heirlooms for her own enjoyment, she began with Maxim's encouragement, to buy works of great quality that weren't local or family connected, such as the elegant Chippendale dressing table on the left, or on the right, the spectacular high chest of drawers bought by the Karolik's from a Rochester family in 1939 for \$12,000, a quite a hefty sum in the depression.

23:32

Now it's important to remember, and I think you can see this readily, that these works were made for the colonial elite, all of the furniture, silver, paintings, and so forth in the first Karolik Collection were high style, urban, made of the best materials, often by known, in fact famous makers for upper class patrons. The second collection of 19th century American paintings

would be different. The art Maxim Karolik was attracted to when he began pursuing his own interests was middlebrow, often provincial or documenting provincial life. For example, on the left Fitz Henry Lane's charming view of Sunday strollers in the tiny coastal town of Castine, Maine, or on the right David Gilmore Blythe's, not entirely complimentary view of patrons gathered around the so-called gentleman's window, as opposed to general delivery in the Pittsburgh post office.

24:36

These works were made for the new industrial and merchant classes and the provincial elite, and, with very few exceptions, were relatively inexpensive in their own day. Furthermore, paintings like these were made not by academically trained well-traveled painters, but by artists, Lane prime among them, who were largely self-taught and achieved only modest reputations in their lifetimes. And as scholars discovered when they began working on the catalog of the collection, a book that appeared in 1949 and it was probably the first modern scholarly study of American Art of this period. The most recent biographical references to many of these artists was to be found in the records of the American Art Union, a lottery that was dissolved in 1852, and this is very much the story of Fitz Henry Lane.

25:35

The objects themselves were generally without pedigree, whereas for the 18th century collection, the history of ownership of most of the objects have been carefully documented, because they were important. For the second collection, for I'd say 75% of the works, there's still no idea who owned these pictures since they weren't very highly valuable before Maxim Karolik bought them. And where prior ownership was known, there's little evidence that the work was particularly prize. The painting on the left by the great Missouri artist George Caleb Bingham, called *Wood Boatman on a River* was given by St. Louis woman to her cook in appreciation of years of service.

26:23

Maxim Karolik began by buying his Cropseys and Coles, his Doughtys and Durands in the late 1930s and early 40s to satisfy his curiosity about what he called the Barren period. The American painting produced between the colonial period of Copley and Stuart and the post-Civil War era, sometimes described as the brown decades, decades that were dominated by artists such as Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer. Karolik wanted to know what happened in between and soon developed a sense of mission about his new interests. Karolik was a born proselytizer and assertive that his pictures, which he characterized as realistic with a poetic touch, filtered through the artists imagination, were deeply satisfying, as well as uplifting, because they presented an idealistic, idyllic view of the past. He also claimed that art was an ennobling and regenerative force in the world, a claim about what he became more adamant in the days of World War II, and therefore shouldn't be the preserve of a select minority but should be for the millions. Excuse me one second.

27:41

In honor of Maxim and this is of course straight vodka. Maxim's populist viewpoint caused him to form his second collection with and for the MFA, Boston. The origins and ground rules were unusual. After a few years of desultory collecting for his own pleasure, in December of 1945, Maxim Karolik approached the Museum of Fine Arts and propose that together, they build a collection of 19th century American paintings for the Museum. Martha by this time was in her 80s and she stayed home, but by letter, endorsed Maxim's project. The trustees said okay, accepting this for the future his proposal but with a couple of rules of the road. First, the Museum's collectors have the right to refuse any painting Karolik proposed for the collection and, this is the part I like best, although Karolik would write the checks, the works would come directly to the MFA. It is astonishing to realize that Karolik never took possession of the paintings he bought after the agreement took effect.

29:01

The history of Lane's now famous *Freshwater Cove from Dolliver's Neck* on the left-hand screen is typical. In the spring of 1946, Karolik reserved it at Harvey Additon, Boston gallery, awaiting curatorial approval, approval it took the curators a little while to get there. And so, it wasn't until November of 1946 that Additon delivered it to the MFA, to the MFA not to the Karolik's in Newport. It stayed at the MFA, still owned by Karolik for a year and a half and then in June of 1948, it was accessioned, that is accepted into the collection, for the Karolik Collection by unanimous vote of the MFA trustees.

29:49

Now, Karolik's private motivations for pursuing this project can only be surmised. His generosity was a natural outgrowth of his expansive personality. What he called his ferocious enthusiasm for American art was an expression of love for his adopted country, or as a friend observed, like all converts, he is more American than the Americans. It can also be argued that Karolik's enterprise was not only philanthropic, but self-serving. He can be suspected of trying to buy himself a pedigree through his close working relationship with the Museum of Fine Arts. His dedication to what would then obscure artists, he sympathetically refers at one point to their gradual descent into oblivion. His dedication to them they have furthermore been prompted by his own position as an outsider. In championing Lane and Heade and others, he was defending the underdog, the overlooked and compensating for his own feelings of exclusion from the Codman family and from Boston society, generally.

31:01

And it's interesting to note in this context, that although Maxim was made honorary curator of American art at the Museum of Fine Arts, and was arguably the greatest donor the MFA ever had, he was never made a trustee. Even after Maxim's portrait at about the time of that gift. Even after some 15 years of marriage, his wife's family and social circle continued to be somewhat suspicious of him. At one point, so the legend goes, the family became alarmed by the scale and direction of his buying, and tightened the purse strings, forcing Maxim to approach the museum for a \$100,000 advance so he could continue to collect. But equally likely

the request for an advance was Karolik's way of obtaining a guarantee of the institution's commitment to his project and to his artists. But like the collectors of the preceding decade, those who favored colonial high style, Karolik's interests were affected not only by his personal psychology, but also by general political and cultural trends.

32:20

Shortly before Karolik began to pursue 19th century depictions of rural America, a group of contemporary artists began illustrating in a realistic if often stylized fashion, small town, and rural life of their own era. Regionalism or American scene painting became the major contemporary style of the 1930s and 40s. Excuse me.

32:48

The themes addressed by American scene painters like Thomas Hart Benton on the left, tended to be homely American subjects, featuring middle and lower-class people and with strong nostalgic components. They recall subjects painted by artists like Eastman Johnson, whose *Winnowing Grain* from 1873 is on the right; Benton's painting is from 1943. Artists like Johnson and William Sidney Mount and James Clonney and others, artists Karolik was collecting at the time this kind of painting on the left was popular. Benton celebrates American farm virtues. As I said, this picture is called *July Hay*, and suggests the notion that (for) everything there is a season. Like this painting *Winter Landscape Cutting Wood* by George Durrie, made 100 years before, it's an image that find its roots in medieval illustrations of labors of the month.

33:53

Another regionalist or American scene painter, John Stuart Curry on the left, paints the violence, the energy and grandeur of the American land, a theme popular in the 19th century as well, as shown in this anonymous work from the Karolik collection, *Running Before the Storm*, on the right. Pictures like the Curry had dominated the contemporary American art scene for at least a decade when Karolik bought this 19th century version.

34:21

And even in formal terms, there are similarities. Some of the leading practitioners of the regionalist style, Grant Wood whose *American Gothic* I think you all know, some of these artists worked in a manner that was not especially painterly. Rather their work is characterized by a severe and stylized realism, based on flat color, and strong linear emphasis, traits found in many 19th century American folk paintings such as *Mr. Tiffan* painted by the otherwise completely obscure A. Else.

35:04

Another factor that began to reinforce Karolik's project was the activity of museums on behalf of American art. By the late 1930s, it's hard for us to imagine that American art was not shown in museums at all. But by the late 1930s, museums began to present American art exhibitions that included paintings of the pre-Civil War period. Some of these shows, for example, the Museum of Modern Art's 1938 exhibition "Sent to Paris", which was designed to showcase

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three centuries of American Art, but which included no Heade, no Lane, no Mount, no Durand, shows like this proved Karolik's point that the Barren period was unfairly neglected and needed an advocate.

35:55

Other exhibitions, such as the Metropolitan Museum's 1939 "Life in America" show began to give exposure to the artists that Karolik was championing. That exhibition included 290 paintings, it makes you tired just to think of it, many of which were the kind of images with which the patrician collectors could readily identify, portraits like the Joseph Blackburn *Isaac Winslow and His Family* on the left, portraits of aristocratic colonials at their ease, full of allusions to wealth. Equally popular were artists active 100 years later, especially the perennially popular Winslow Homer, and one of the favorite paintings of the show was Homer's *Snap the Whip* of 1872. I'm showing you that on the right.

36:49

However, there was some representation always(?) that Karolik collected and some acknowledgement through genre paintings by William Sidney Mount. There's his *Bargaining for a Horse* on the left, George Caleb Bingham, his *Raftsmen Playing Cards* on the right, and Johnson and others. Painters like this showed life in America beyond and besides the life of the urban upper classes, the Blackburn or the idyllic never, never land of children.

37:28

Among the paintings in this show was Fitz Henry Lane's, called Fitz Hugh then, *Southwest Harbor*. There it is on the right. It was given a half page illustration, but only two lines of commentary in the catalog. *Southwest Harbor* essentially paints the entrance of Somes Sound of Southwest harbor; it's in a private collection now. It was described, "Southwest Harbor, now a fashionable resort, was one of the quiet fishing hamlets dotting the Maine coast when this picture was made. No biographical information was offered." It's as though the show's organizers were entranced by the picture, but had absolutely no idea who the artist was. This may have been the first major exhibition of the 20th century to include a Fitz Henry Lane.

38:21

Four years later in 1943, the Museum of Modern Art put on a similarly broad survey of American art called "Romantic Painting in America". It introduced a number of artists who Karolik himself had begun to discover. More importantly, it influenced his decision to turn from private collector to public benefactor. That is to stop buying simply for his own pleasure and build a major collection of his art for the public. "Romantic Painting in America" attempted to present the side of American Art containing the realism with a poetic touch that Karolik talked about. Many of the works in that show, now known as icons. were then virtually unknown. On the left, Washington Allston's *Moonlight*. On the right Asher Durand's *Kindred Spirits*, a portrait of the poet William Bryant and the painter Thomas Cole.

39:20

George Caleb Bingham's *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri* and this anonymous work called *Meditation by the Sea*, which was in fact lent by Karolik. These textbook pictures were all in the exhibition. This was also the show in which Karolik discovered his other favorite, the artist with whom Lane is most often paired, Martin Johnson Heade. When the painting on the right *Thunderstorm Over Narragansett Bay*, when it appeared in the, in the show Museum of Modern Art Karolik didn't recognize the artist, no one did. He would have been only moderately popular in his own time was completely forgotten by the 1940s. But this picture captivated everyone. Karolik desperately wanted to buy it, but he got there too late. Instead, he acquired the next best one, on the left, *Approaching Storm, Beach Near Newport*, a picture that has been described as dispiriting, frightening, otherworldly, even surreal.

40:27

We still don't know how Karolik discovered Lane. Lane was not included in *Romantic Painting in America*. In a letter of 1954, Karolik asserts that when an artist is alive, he needs a patron; when he is dead, he needs a discoverer. Karolik then goes on to tell the story of being the discoverer of Heade at the MoMA show, but of Lane he says only, "The first time I heard about him was from Mr. Baur." He's talking about John Baur, then the curator of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Karolik then goes on to say, very concisely, "At that time, Lane was known principally as a painter of ships." Lane shows up again at another smaller exhibition from this era in the autumn of 1944, the dealer John Levy, from whom Karolik had bought a number of pictures, put on an exhibition in his 57th Street gallery called "Exhibition of Romantic Landscapes by American Artists". The show included 19 paintings, including works by Thomas Cole, Thomas Doughty, Samuel F.B. Morse, Cropsey's *Greenwood Lake*, which you see on the left, and *A View of Gloucester* by Fitz Henry Lane.

41:52

Some of these works can be identified, though with the Lane, it isn't clear which *View of Gloucester* was in the show, whether or if the work was for sale or what price was ask. It could have been Karolik's, for he did lend to the show an already owned *Gloucester from Brookbank*, which is on the right. In fact, Karolik, who only began collecting 19th century American paintings in earnest in the early 40s, was buying his favorites in great numbers. The scale of his collecting was as remarkable as its depth. Karolik eventually owned more than 40 Heade's and 16 Lane's. He gave the MFA thirty of the Heade's and 8 of the Lane's over his lifetime. And after he gave his collection of paintings to the MFA in 1948, he was asked by Electra Havemeyer Webb to help build a paintings collection in the Karolik spirit for the Shelburne Museum in Vermont. So Karolik went shopping again, and among the many works he sought out and bought for the Shelburne were six Lane's, including on the left, *Sunrise Through Mist* and on the right, *Yacht, Northern Light in Boston Harbor*. He sold these paintings to Webb at a nominal price in 1959. And I'm really sorry he didn't give these two to us instead, to the MFA instead.

43:25

As I said, Karolik's active buying of early, of 19th century American paintings began about 1943. That year, he bought 68 pictures for a total of \$48,000. Of these, five were Lanes including the

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two you see here: on the left, *Ships in Ice Off Ten Pound Island* and on the right -- I think's it's in the exhibition across the street -- *Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine*. These were among the over 300 pictures that Karolik bought in six years of active collecting. He could do this with a relatively modest purse for during those days American art was very cheap, and Karolik rarely had to spend more than \$1,000 for a picture. The prices he paid for Heade's and Lane's were typical. He paid \$475 for Heade's *Magnolia Grandiflora* on the left, and \$850 for a painting called the *Brig "Antelope"* by Lane on the right. I don't have a slide of the *Brig "Antelope"* so I'm showing you a similar though actually a higher quality ship portrait. This is the *Clipper Ship Southern Cross, Leaving Boston Harbor*. It's the kind of picture for which Karolik paid \$850.

44:53

On the other hand, these two exquisite pictures *Ships in Ice* and *Owl's Head*, left and right, cost him only \$550 for the pair. And I think the price must have had something to do with size. I guess you bought them by the square inch of them. But these figures and Karolik's reputation as a bargain lover are somewhat unfair and misleading. Most of his collection was put together during the war when the whole art market was depressed and other than Winslow Homer no American master consistently bought four figures.

45:33

Nonetheless, today's art market confirms Karolik's investments and his faith in these artists. The most he ever paid for a Lane during the 1940s: \$1400 for *New York Harbor*, there on the right, is a far cry from the \$5.5 million Lane's *Manchester Harbor* brought an auction in 2004. Now fair is fair, I should note that Karolik wasn't alone his enthusiasm for Lane, at the time. The late 1930s and early 40s was an era of quiet rediscovery of Lane's work. Nina Fletcher Little in her wonderful memoir *Little by Little*, recalls buying her Lane for less than \$25, ouch, at an obscure Boston auction, those are her words, in about 1938. The painting on the left now at the National Gallery in Washington, was bought by Francis Hatch a few years later from the same Boston dealer Harvey Additon, who sold Karolik a couple of his Lanes.

46:44

And as you know well, at the same time, Lanes were occasionally moving into public view. The Sargent family which had owned Stage Fort across *Gloucester Harbor* on the left, since the 19th century, (don't cry Martha) and about in about 1938 placed it on view at the Sargent Murray Gilman house. 40 years later, it was sold to the Metropolitan Museum. And I don't need to remind this audience that beginning in the late 1930s, and maybe even earlier, Alfred Mansfield Brooks began generally persuading the local codfish aristocracy, to give or bequeath their loans such as the glorious *Gloucester Harbor at Sunrise* to the Cape Ann. Under Brooks' leadership, the Cape Ann Scientific and Literary Association, as it was then called, began to be given Lanes in quantity. *Babson and Ellery Houses* and *Riverdale* there on the left, were donated to the Cape Ann in 1937.

47:47

In the next decade, the Cape Ann was given more than a dozen Lanes, including *Gloucester Harbor from Rocky Neck* and this *View of Gloucester Harbor* that you see here. Now I've yet to find any hard evidence that Brooks and Karolik knew one another, but it's hard to imagine that their paths didn't cross somehow or that they were unaware of each other's projects. In a way, they were on parallel tracks. Brooks' goal for Lane was analogous to what Karolik was trying to do for Heade, that is they want to bring into their designated institutions, the artist's entire career. So, for Heade, for example, Karolik sought out works from every phase of the artist's career, early portraits and Victorian still lifes. Marsh scenes done up and down the East Coast from Newburyport to Florida, and pictures of exotic hummingbirds and tropical flowers.

48:47

Brooks was likewise after all phases of Lane's career: prints, drawings, and paintings of all subject types, house portraits, ship portrait, rough seas pictures, topographical landscapes and harbor views. Karolik had a different take on Lane. Although he collected his work in quantity, he had a special affinity for the quietly majestic harbor views and the late moody seascapes full of nostalgic touches, rather than the conventional ship portraits of those who own only one. In fact, it was the Karolik Collection that created the chase for what is sometimes now known as luminism. In Lane's day, the rough seas pictures, and the ship portraits seem to have been in greater demand.

49:40

Today, our view about parallels Karolik's. We still favor the eloquently silent preternaturally empty pictures, such as the quiet Salem Harbor on the left or the picture once called Ipswich Bay, but now known by the title Lane inscribed on the reverse *View of Coffins Beach*. To get a fuller sense of Karolik's 19th century collection and where his Lane's fit, you should know that not all of Karolik's pictures were by middlebrow artists. The collection does include works by Washington Allston, there is his *Landscape with Lake*, John Vanderlyn, Samuel F.B. Morris and other grand manor painters, but by and large, the viewer was not part of the aesthetic Karolik pursued.

50:35

Rather, he sought out pictures like the *Kensett Bash-Bish Falls* on the left, that are modest in scale and mood, which is somewhat surprising given Karolik's penchant for self-dramatization. Most are quiet, small, local scenes *Gloucester from Brookbank* being an example, he never bought a big painting by Frederick Church. The pictures like this one, which is actually the size of the screen. Pictures like this one were available at the time he was collecting. Scale, noise, pyrotechnics just didn't appeal to him. He didn't much like exotic subjects either. He owned only two fairly modest South American Heades despite his deliberate pursuit of all other aspects of the painter's career. The mood of Karolik's pictures was calm, not apocalyptic, mellow, sometimes melancholy and nostalgic, but equally often charming and reassuring.

51:37

The Karolik Collection opened to the public in 1951 in six specially designed galleries that had once been the MFA's classical court. The galleries celebrated the Karolik gift, some 232 paintings, and also served as a memorial to Martha, who had died a few years before. This long-neglected aspect the American art was enthusiastically received, as one critic wrote, "from now on, no one can seriously study 19th century American paintings without knowing this collection." Lane and Heade had pride of place in this installation and to underscore their importance within the collection, a handsome book, a handsome picture book, dedicated to each one was published shortly after the Karolik galleries open to the public. And not long after that selections from the Karolik Collection began to be circulated around the country.

52:35

Of these shows, perhaps the closest to Karolik's heart was the first one, a special exhibition of Heades and Lanes at Knoedler's gallery in New York, there were 10 Lanes and 30 Heades all from the Karolik Collection. It was Lane's first significant exhibition in New York City since the 19th century. This show too is highly regarded by the press, as had been the case when the Metropolitan Museum's period rooms opened in 1924. The time was right for the rediscovery of American Art, but this time for the middlebrow art of the 19th century. The 1950s stressed wholesome middle class values. It was the era of *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* on TV. Norman Rockwell's cheerful covers continued to grace the *Saturday Evening Post* on the right is showing *Happy birthday, Miss Jones* from 1956, and it was the era of Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals "As Corny as Kansas in August." Popular culture stressed the sunny and small town.

53:48

History books of the period underscored this determinately optimistic, patriotic view. They suggested that America of the past had been shaped by the spiritual ancestors of America's contemporary model citizens, middle class families enjoying economic comfort and sharing traditional values. The opening of the second Karolik collection in 1951 also coincided with the political ascendancy of General Eisenhower and a period of widespread prosperity. To depart from the rosy cheeked all-American values of the Rockwell covers seemed un-American.

54:28

On the other hand, or at the same time, the shadow cast by the McCarthy hearings was long, there was little public expression of conflict or dissent. American history was seen as uniformly progressive, untainted by injustice, inequality, or disagreement. In other words, in the 1950s, the middle-class, white, Protestant, and moderately well off, had replaced the upper class, the Anglo-Saxon elite, as the representative body and setter of standards. A bourgeois bias had replaced an elitist one. Americans readily saw in the sun is comfortable of sometimes wistful paintings of the Karolik Collection. And on the left, I'm showing the Henry Inman's *Dismissal of School on an October Afternoon*. It's an equally upbeat and rosy cheek picture. We saw on pictures such as these the antecedents of a wholesome, homogenous image of American life, stressed on TV and in the magazines.

55:37

But that the Karolik Collection reflected the values of its own time, doesn't diminish the quality of the works in that collection, nor does it diminish his achievement. Many of the works Karolik discovered in the 1940s, Heade's *Lake George* on the left, Lane's *Owl's Head* on the right. Many of these works are icons now. The unknown figures he championed, Heade and Lane, have pride of place on museum walls today.

56:14

The Karolik collection caused many chapters have a history of American art to be re-written. Through his gift to the Museum of Fine Arts, folk art, one acceptance as museum worthy material, we see John Brewster's *Child with a Peach* on the left, and a theorem painting, *Bird Picking Strawberries from the Basket*, the mid 19th century, on the right, pictures like these through Karolik, one acceptance as museum worthy material, as did anonymous works and paintings by artists without oppressive pedigrees, academic training, or established reputations. Karolik was one of the first to be interested in the oil sketch. On the left is Thomas Cole's *Salvator Rosa Sketching Banditti* there is Salvator Rosa in white, basically in red, on right at the lower right corner. And on the left Lane's *Braces Rock*, several versions in the exhibition. Karolik's interest in the oil sketch was a recognition of one of the most charming aspects of American Art of the 19th century and a precocious recognition of the value of the informal and the intimately scaled that is so much part of contemporary tastes. Karolik was also a pioneer at appreciating America's work, American works on paper. Thanks to him, The Museum of Fine Arts Boston is the repository of the nation's most important collection of American prints and drawings, including five lithographs by Lane, there's one on the left, and this rare, elegant watercolor on the right.

57:56

Maxim Karolik was never shy about his enthusiasms. He is credited with having the most eloquent forefinger in Boston. And given the least opportunity would lecture to any audience about his favorites. Here he is in 1963, the year of his death, in mid-explanation.

58:20

Happily, for all of us, his enthusiasms have been contagious. And since his gifts to the MFA, there have been numerous exhibitions, stimulating and beautiful, featuring the works of his beloved landscape and genre painters. Of his top two, Heade and Lane, there have been shows in 1988 of Lane 1999 of Heade, these at the MFA and other museums and now here at the Cape Ann, this intriguing exhibition looking hard at lighting and Mary Mellen, the most telling of the artists working in his orbit. And Karolik's generosity has encouraged the generosity of others. I'm going to close with this charming early Lane, *The Britannia entering Boston Harbor*, which came to the MFA as a gift a few years ago. It's the kind of celebration of American history of daily life in America, that Karolik with his boundless optimism, would have liked best. A buoyant meeting of steam and sail, with lapping waves, softly painted sky, flags flying, riggings precisely displayed, again his realism with the poetic touch. And best of all, the men in the rowboat in

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the foreground, hats aloft, full of excitement at being witnesses to a seemingly glorious future.
Thank you very much.

1:00:04

Questions? Ronda do we have time for questions. Anything I can tell you? Do you want to go home and have dessert? Yes.

1:00:20

Not by Karolik that we know of that is we're pretty sure all our Lanes, are Lanes, and we don't have anything that look like the Mellen across the street. I think that's the next stage of research about her, figuring out where those paintings came from, because that will tell us a lot, but they seem not to have surfaced, at least on the market in Karolik's day because he doesn't go there. Yes.

1:00:56

I'm sorry?

1:01:00

Did he ever do anything but sit and collect? He married money. And actually, he did keep singing. At the MFA, we have a huge number of records that he produced of him singing Russian folk songs and it is not for the faint of heart. Anymore? Thank you very, very much for coming.