

Fronting up to the American Public: Owen Merton's Exhibitions in the United States

By Roger Collins

In 1916, Owen and Ruth Merton and their one-year-old son Tom left a country at war to take up life in one still at peace. They had not been in any physical danger but Owen was liable to conscription, and a disrupted tourist industry deprived him of market and income. They were, in a sense, economic refugees. Furthermore, the "provincial" who had traveled from his colonial periphery to the center (first London, then Paris) before retreating to the isolation of the French provinces, was once again moving to a metropolitan center. After two years during which he had not shown at any major venue, he could reasonably hope to revive his career as an exhibiting artist. They arrived in New York during the "Little Renaissance," a remarkable period of renovation in the arts and in social and political thinking.¹

In the visual arts, 1908 had been a key year. It saw both the controversial "Eight" show of paintings, "the first salvo of rebellion in American painting" in the twentieth century,² which was a direct response to illiberal decisions by the National Academy of Design (Wertheim 134), and the first exhibitions of modern art at Stieglitz's Gallery 291 (drawings by French sculptor Auguste Rodin in January and prints, drawings and oils by Henri Matisse in April) (Davidson 13). "The exhibitions at 291 . . . certainly helped pave the way for the gradual acceptance of modern art" (Wertheim 128).

1913 was another high point. The now legendary *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, better known as the Armory Show, was an emphatic introduction of European modernism to the American public. Among other things, it gave painter and museum curator Bryson Burroughs the opportunity to buy a Cézanne for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the first such acquisition by an American museum.

The group which gathered around Alfred Stieglitz and his Gallery 291 was small, and its direct influence may well have been limited, but the growing interest in modern art of which it was a distinguished part saw the opening of several new dealer galleries in New York in the years 1913–15. Arthur Frank Wertheim identifies the most important of these as the Daniel, which opened in December 1913. It was owned by a former café and hotel operator, Charles Daniel, who "put together an outstanding list of American modernists: Man Ray, Charles Demuth, William Zorach, Marsden Hartley, Stuart Davis, Ernest Lawson, Samuel Halpert, Rockwell Kent, and Preston Dickinson" (Wertheim 143).³ The *Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters* in 1916 was another touchstone event, bringing together works by sixteen of the artists supported by Stieglitz and Daniel (Davidson 172).

A further important strand in this renaissance was a movement

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which by-passed the powerful, inflexible and oppressive National Academy of Design. Groups of artists dared to organize exhibitions with no jury and no prizes: the Armory Show was one important example of this and the formation of the Society of Independent Artists in 1916 was another. This Society held its first exhibition in 1917, bringing "to a climax the prewar independent movement" (Wertheim 145).

In this artistic climate we must imagine Merton conscientiously seeking out dealers and exhibitions and congenial fellow-artists as he sought to establish himself in his new country. The implications of Robert Daggy's statement that "Owen . . . more or less stopped painting"⁴ during his time in America need to be fine-tuned. We do not know how many works he painted there but his exhibition record proves conclusively that he remained faithful to at least *one* aspect of his profession. From mid-1916 to 1925, the year of his final departure, Merton exhibited in the United States at least 24 times, and probably more.

In Owen's time, there were two "systems" within which artists could exhibit – "do-it-yourself," often informal, self-organized shows, and the structured world of artists' societies, dealers and museums, and he had been well acquainted with both of them since his earliest days, back in New Zealand.

In America, his introduction to that "informal" system had in fact happened one day in December 1913, two and a half years before he himself entered the country. Ruth Jenkins, home from Europe for a visit, had organized the display of fifteen of Owen's pictures in her parents' house in Douglaston, Queens. It rained heavily on the day of the exhibition, people stayed away, and no works were sold.⁵

Later, after his immigration, there are two recorded instances of Merton himself working that system. One was held on a Saturday and a Sunday in an unnamed month and an unidentified year, at the League Building on Sanford Avenue, in Flushing.⁶

OWEN MERTON TO
EXHIBIT HIS WORK
HERE THIS WEEK

Flushing Artist To Show Landscapes
Painted Around Long Island, With
Others From England and France
Addresses Gathering of Members On [*sic*]

The scenic beauty of Long Island and more particularly of Flushing, as seen by an artist whose landscape[s] have been painted in many parts of the world will be the leading feature of an exhibition to be held at the League building on Saturday afternoon and evening and on Sunday, when Owen Merton, who resides at 57 Hillside, Flushing, will place on exhibition his paintings. Particular interest may be noted in the fact that English and French landscapes are to be combined with those painted in Flushing, furnishing an interesting comparison even to the laymen, while Mr. Merton's long study and experience afford the art-lover a particularly charming opportunity.

Mr. Merton is a New Zealander by birth. He studied painting in London for three years, and for a similar period in Paris. He worked at St. Ives, Cornwall, and at Concarneau, on the coast of Brittany, both noted for their scenic beauty. In 1909 he was elected a member of the Royal Society of British Artists, at London, and has exhibited works with them and with the International Society, the New English Art Club and others.

He has been a resident of Flushing for three years, during which time he has exhibited with the New York Water Color Club, the American Water Color Society, the Pennsylvania Academy at Philadelphia, Knoedler's Gallery on Fifth avenue, Manhattan, and regularly at the Daniel Gallery, at 2 West Forty-seventh street. Mr. Merton is highly interested in the art of landscaping for gardens, and finds Long Island an excellent field for his ideas of combining natural beauties with artistic arrangement and color contrast.

VERSATILITY IN ART
EXHIBITION HELD BY
FLUSHING PAINTER

An exhibition of paintings, principally landscapes, furnishing to the art-lover a delightful hour and to the layman an interesting comparison of Long Island scenery with that of beautiful spots in England and Brittany, was that of Owen Merton, held at the League Building, Sanford avenue, on Saturday and Sunday afternoon, at which a large representation of the canvasses of this Flushing artist were on view.

Both oil and water color were in evidence, and the painter's versatility was emphatically amplified by the catholicity of taste displayed in the pictures. Mr. Merton combines the technique of the nineteenth century European school, with a touch of modern American. He is realist in that he visualizes the beauties of nature as they are; impressionist in his ability to paint into a landscape the spirit of the scene as well as its actualities. Obviously he is a nature-lover, one of those who see in nature not only a wonderful piece of handiwork, but much of the divine feeling that is art.

This is especially noticeable in his later work. His English landscapes are the work of a technician. Splendidly he portrays the natural beauties of Britain's quiet countryside. A careful lover of detail, he glories in the colorfulness of the scene. In his landscapes of Brittany, there is all of the quaint charm of that picturesque country.

But in his later Long Island paintings, he has caught the spirit. England is England and Brittany is Brittany, but his scenes of Flushing and its surroundings are nature itself – not a single section. Here the painter has become a finished artist.

The other self-organized solo exhibition was held at 56 Washington Mews in downtown Manhattan, on the afternoons of Saturday, June 2 and Sunday, June 3, 1923. Unfortunately, the descriptive leaflet⁷ does not name the works on display – “selected by himself from several recent groups of paintings, including his Cape Cod sketches and his latest Bermuda sketches, which were shown during April-May [1923] at the Daniel Gallery” – and is filled instead with a text by Cyril Kay-Scott.

OWEN MERTON, one of the most significant water-colourists in America, though having a long and severe technical training behind him, in his recent work entirely escapes any doctrinaire taint. Merton, while profoundly versed in the theories of modern painting, is not a sterile theorist. Neither is he a pure temperamental without intelligence. His art is a synthesis in the most valuable sense of the

psychical elements in his fine personality which best unite in significant visual expression.

Merton's typical paintings do not belong with the multitudes of mere "logical" consequences of Cézanne-ism, via the mediate influence of Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse, the Cubists, or Derain. Merton is too intense and sincere an artist not to forge for himself a highly individualized modality of articulation. His directness is the direction of simplicity and immediacy of identification with his subject, and is achieved with the minimum of distortion compatible with sensitive instinctive selection.

As is invariably the case with those coming for the first time to contact with modern art (equally in music, word forms, and color-forms) the untrained spectator or audience accustomed to mere photographic representation, anecdote, or diagrams of isolated ideas, will doubtless find much to confuse him, even in the lucid and unaffected, while brilliant and dynamic, organizations of Owen Merton; but after a couple of decades of struggle with the permanently blind, deaf, and dumb citizens of our land, it is high time that gifted artists like Merton and his confrères be spared the strain of meeting the Murillo lover, and be left free to paint for those who appreciate genuine advance in achievement.

– C. K. S.

Merton began his active involvement with the formally-structured American art establishment in 1917. The inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists,⁸ which contained about 2,500 works by 1,200 artists (Naumann 34), counts as one of the highlights of the independent movement, offering a spectacular challenge to the National Academy of Design. Its organizers rejected the traditional structures of jury⁹ and prizes, avoided any chance of favoritism by displaying works in strict alphabetical order of artist's name, and accepted two works by anyone who could pay the \$1 joining fee and \$5 for annual membership. Thus, Merton's presence somewhere in that crowd does not reflect any independent appreciation of his work.

There is uncertainty over the date of an exhibition of *The Work of John Alger, Louis Bouche, James Butler, Wood Gaylor, Gus Mager, Owen Merton, George F. Of, John F. Parker and Hilda Ward*, held by the People's Art Guild at its New York headquarters, 918 Cauldwell Avenue. The invitation carries no date but a manuscript draft of the catalogue itself is tentatively annotated: "[date? 1917]."¹⁰ It lists eight watercolors and one pen drawing by Merton, eight of French subjects and one American – *Snow in the Suburbs, N.Y.* – at prices ranging from \$25 to \$45.

Other group shows followed. In March 1918 he had a watercolor, *French Market Place*, at the Art Alliance of America, in the Alliance's galleries at 10 East 47th Street. At the end of 1919 he was represented by three works in an exhibition of *Works of Art by Long Island Artists*, held in the Ardsley Studio: *Edge of the Town, Washington Bridge* and *Gypsy Camp*. *The New York Times* observed that "The large, clean sweep of the embankment in Owen Merton's 'Washington Bridge' is well seen and indicated with certainty of hand."¹¹

Less than three months later, in March 1920, he was included in the first annual exhibition of the Brooklyn Water Color Club. The titles of his three works indicate that he was well-launched on a visual exploration of his new home: *Picking Peas – Long Island, Souvenir of Flushing* and *Coming Storm*. In the following year, at the second annual exhibition (March-April 1921), he showed two further local subjects, *Long Island Farm* and *Huntington, L. I.*, and at the third exhibition (March-April 1922) he showed views of *Marseilles* and a *Mountain Pass*.

Another organization to which he submitted work was the Salons of America, an independent, “no-jury-no-prizes” artists’ group, founded in 1922. At its inaugural exhibition (October-November 1922) Merton showed one work, *Souvenir of Provincetown*, and followed that up in October 1924 with *Palm Trees* and an untitled watercolor.¹²

Embarrassment, even humiliation, must have been the lot of countless artists as they approached dealer galleries in search of sympathetic support, and novelist Evelyn Scott writes of this process as Merton may have lived it. In *Bread and a Sword*,¹³ Alec Williams (a writer, although based on Owen), tries to interest a New York dealer in the paintings of his wife Kate. The contrast between Williams’s poverty and the gallery décor, “reeking expensiveness,” the fatuous conversation of clients, the arrogant and dismissive dealer himself, all add up to a striking blend of sympathy for the suppliant, and biting satire.

In due course, after how many rebuffs we cannot guess, Merton was taken on by three commercial galleries, the Ferargil Galleries (whose demand for payment of \$50 in expenses he reported receiving in May 1924¹⁴), the New Gallery (where he was included in a group of eight artists as late as June 1925¹⁵) and, most importantly, the prestigious Daniel Gallery with which he was associated from 1918 to 1925.

The majority of his appearances at the Daniel were in medium-sized (around 11 individual artists) to large (at least 24 participants) group shows. His first recorded appearance there took place in 1918 (April-May) and his name was cited in passing by the critic of the *American Art News*.¹⁶ Later in the same year (October-November) his view of *Golden Avenue, Flushing* was displayed: once again, the *American Art News* noted his contribution.¹⁷ *The Bay* and *Landscape* were his two works in a 1919 show (April-May), and this time *The New York Times* mentioned him.¹⁸ *A Portrait of a House* was exhibited in October-November 1920, and he was named by the reviewers of both *The New York Times* and the *American Art News*.¹⁹ The last of the Daniel’s group shows that included him was in November-December 1922.

More significant than these rather diffuse occasions in which he could have disappeared in the crowd, was a compact show held in December 1919-January 1920. This time he was associated with only five other artists, distinguished artists moreover – Charles Demuth, John Marin, William and Marguerite Zorach and William Yarrow – under the title *Water Colorists of Distinction*. The only work by Merton we can name is *Coming Storm*.

A group of watercolors by such individual painters as Charles Demuth, John Marin, Owen Merton, William Yarrow and the Zorachs, fill the walls of the Daniel galleries 2 W. 47 St., though Jan 1. . . . Owen Merton’s examples are delicate in tone, yet “Coming Storm,” has its dramatic effect.²⁰

If it is true, as the old music hall song affirms, that there is a direct correlation between a gentleman’s reputation and the company he keeps, Merton must have been highly regarded by Charles Daniel. Several times he was placed alongside four members of the Eight Group – Lawson, Glackens, Henri and Prendergast – and eleven of the sixteen selected for the *Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters* (Davidson 172). Moreover, at different times Merton was frequently exhibited with each of those whom Wertheim identifies as Daniel’s principal modernists – Ray, Demuth, Zorach, Hartley, Davis, Lawson, Halpert, Kent, and Dickinson (Wertheim 143). In a number of exhibitions he was also associated with the watercolorist John Marin, and with Hayley Lever, an Australian-born artist who, like Owen, had once been elected to membership of the Royal Society of British Artists in London.

Merton organized two solo exhibitions by himself, one perhaps in 1920 and one certainly in 1923, but he also had the satisfaction of receiving solo shows at the Daniel, the first in 1923, the other in 1925. These possibly mark the peak of his American career, and what press coverage has been located is largely favorable, but no lists of the works displayed have been located.

Bermuda Paintings were shown in April-May 1923. The catalogue text was written by Cyril Scott (was it later re-used for the Washington Mews show?) and the exhibition was well-received.²¹

Water Colors of Bermuda.

In the exhibition of water colors of Bermuda by Owen Merton on view now at the Daniel Galleries one feels that behind these apparently quickly made paintings is study and knowledge and judgment. Mr Merton may have been influenced, not too obviously, by the landscape of the Japanese print. In one composition he has put heavy darks around the lower part of a blue pool and brought the line around the pool lightening gradually in value into distant lulls. Especially fine is the splendid swing of line in "Flowing Sunbound Hill." In "Coral Houses," the big roofs of the foreground frame a tiny distant island. The tops of the houses are flat and simple and the island quite rich. This is a delightful exhibition.²²

Merton's Water Colors

Owen Merton has drawn something out of the Bermuda landscape that is refreshingly individual, evident in the water colors shown at the Daniel Gallery until May 1. They partake of the character and spirit of the place without that emphasis on surface peculiarities which are generally seen in the traveling artist's impressions of a strange spot.

It is true that some of these might have been inspired by a landscape no farther away than Connecticut, some of the hillsides with trees, for instance. "Coral Houses," on the other hand, is distinctively Bermudan, and its housetops and distant island set in blue water have a remarkable feeling for receding planes. "Inland Harbor" comes second in importance, and in both one notices the fine quality of blue which is the nearest approach to brilliance in Mr. Merton's color, his preference being for tawny earth colors and muted greens.²³

The November 1925 exhibition introduced a new theme, the Algerian subjects which had recently entered his repertoire. Several press items have been located, expressing diverse responses.

The Daniel Galleries, 600 Madison Avenue, will hold an exhibition of water-colors, painted for the most part, in the south of France, by Owen Merton, who seems gifted with an acute sense of color relations.²⁴

Water Colors.

OWEN MERTON brings up color as near to white heat as it can possibly reach and still retain its color, with very sparkling effect. If arbitrary, it has, nevertheless, a symbolic relation to reality. Skies are blue, clouds are white and distant hills are purple. The artist has been painting in Algiers [*sic*] and the south of France for the sake of the brilliancy of the light rather than because of any apparent

interest in the countries themselves. The landscapes have breadth, and, in spite of the high key, are untainted by the slightest hint of sentimentality. But with all these imposing virtues a labored intellectual effort checks spontaneous sympathy on the part of the spectator. One is more easily quickened by a less able and more instinctive artist. Owen Merton – The Daniel Galleries – Closes Nov. 23.²⁵

Merton's Water Colors

In the few seasons since Owen Merton first appeared with his water colors in New York galleries – his Bermuda subjects are especially remembered – he has considerably extended the boundaries of his expression. The present exhibition of his water colors of France and Algiers [*sic*], at the Daniel Galleries until Nov. 23, shows a mastering of a significant brevity which comes not so much from elimination as condensation. There is one landscape under a ridge of hills that is like the Chinese in its terse adequacy.

To praise his pictures for their fine *pianissimo* touch is to suggest that perhaps they are fragile and slight, but the delicate touch with which he best expresses himself is capable of many shades of meaning, of value, of quality, and these he has under a control that seems to be growing more assured.

"Street with Shadows" has a tempo that is emphasized by the bars of gray that march into the distance; "French Fort, Bousaada" is permeated with a rare unity, each part in a sensitively felt relation to the whole. Decidedly he has advanced over his former work in his indication of the relations of planes to each other so that these new pictures have a richer depth than anything he has shown before.²⁶ They are pleasantly colorful water-colors that Owen Merton is showing at the Daniel gallery. In nearly a score of subjects he makes a spirited though a not frequently convincing impression upon the imagination. Yet their color conveyed with a deft, impressionistic touch, persists. It matters little whether the things represented are scenes from Algiers and France. One urban selection in the lot, the "Mosque, Bousaada," is illustrative, but otherwise he might have painted anywhere among low hills struck by a shimmering heat. You do feel the heat, the play of glancing sunlight. There is not much else to pin one's faith to.²⁷

Owen Merton's purpose is to suggest and not to realize. His ethereal sense of color is beautifully exhibited in "Collioure Evening" with its shimmer of color in the water, while the effectively piled up mass of "Cathedral from the River, Beziers" proves that his severe economy of treatment is not inconsistent with an appreciation of volumes, design, and construction.²⁸

Two other reviews are quoted by Cyril Kay-Scott in his 1931 article but it is not clear to which of the solo exhibitions each refers.

Mr. Merton's water colors seem to have captured the indefinable atmospheric brilliancy that gives solidity to the deep blue shadows of his pictures and renders houses and climbing slopes the diaphanous substance of a mirage. His color is pure and his composition subtly effective.²⁹

The Owen Merton Exhibition of water colors at Daniel's only goes to show once more that we have in the United States a small group of water color painters

who with each succeeding exhibition of their works prove their superiority over the art of water color as practiced in any other country. We hear a great deal about Marin and Demuth. I do not think that we hear as much as we should about Merton.³⁰

Another measure of success for an artist is inclusion in a carefully selected, curated survey show in a public gallery. For Merton, this appears to have happened twice, the first occasion being in Philadelphia in April-May 1921.

The *Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings Showing the Later Tendencies in Art* was put together in New York, and the host institution, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, was “merely extending to the modernists the courtesy of space and ‘a hearing’.”³¹ The selection committee consisted of Arthur B. Carles, Joseph Stella, Thomas Hart Benton, Alfred Stieglitz, William Yarrow, Paul Burlin and Bernard Gussow, at least four of whom – Yarrow, Burlin, Stella and Benton – were members of the Daniel stable. “Jolt for Philadelphia” was the *American Art News*’s headline on April 9, but two weeks later it was much less provocative, declaring this to be “the best display that has ever been made by the American Modernists. . . . It contains the best that is in Modernist art, rather than the interminable hodge-podge one has to wade through at the Independents’ annual show.”³² Merton’s works were *Hillside*, *Coming Storm*, *Marseilles*, *View of Flushing* and *The Village*.³³

The Brooklyn Museum held an *Exhibition of Water Color Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture by American and European Artists*, in November-December 1923. Merton’s two pictures were a large (532 x 730 mm.) view of *Bermuda*, which the Museum eventually bought, and *The Old Church*. The press reports located to date name enough of the exhibitors to give an impression of the general flavor of the show. There were some distinguished European contributors, while the Americans included George Hart, John Sargent, George Luks, Jerome Myers, E. V. Warren, McDonald Wright, Max Weber, Abraham Walkowitz, Georgia O’Keeffe, Thomas Hart Benton and Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

There remain some obscure moments in this survey. Merton may have also had work hung at Knoedler’s Gallery on 5th Avenue, the New York Water Color Club and the American Water Color Society.³⁴ The 1925 Leicester Galleries catalogue reports that he had exhibited with the Junior Art Patrons of America. Furthermore, it has been stated that he showed at Stieglitz’s 291 Gallery in 1920³⁵ even though 291 closed in 1917 (Davidson 14). No confirmation of these claims has yet been located.

It is clear enough, too, that Owen’s *paintings* frequently crossed paths with the works of many distinguished contemporaries, but that in itself is not evidence that he knew any of them personally. We do know, however, that Owen was a friend of painter Reginald Marsh,³⁶ and Cyril Kay-Scott identified Bryson Burroughs, painter, museum curator and neighbor, as “chief” among Merton’s supportive American friends (Kay-Scott 34). Merton certainly knew Stieglitz,³⁷ which suggests that he may also have known the members of the Stieglitz group.

During his years in New York, Merton was clearly more active as an artist than we had previously thought. He sought out and took up numerous professional opportunities and was represented in a couple of historically important group shows. It is a fact that his paintings were associated with the work of some of America’s leading modernists, but does this mean that he himself achieved high recognition? Is the available documentation truly representative, or seriously incomplete? More investigation is still necessary, investigation that might force yet another revision of our perception of Owen Merton as an American painter.³⁸

¹ Arthur Frank Wertheim, *The New York Little Renaissance: Iconoclasm, Modernism, and Nationalism in American Culture, 1908–1917* (New York: New York University Press, 1976); subsequent references will be cited as “Wertheim” parenthetically in the text.

² Abraham A. Davidson, *Early American Modernist Painting 1910–1935* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981) 166; subsequent references will be cited as “Davidson” parenthetically in the text. See also John I. H. Baur, *Revolution and Tradition in Modern American Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954). The members of this group, also known as the “Ashcan School,” were Arthur P. Davies, Ernest Lawson, John Sloan, William Glackens, Robert Henri, George Luks, Maurice Prendergast, and Everett Shinn.

³ See also Elizabeth McCausland, “The Daniel Gallery and Modern American Art,” *Magazine of Art* (November 1951) 280–85, and Julie Melby, “A Record of Charles Daniel and the Daniel Gallery,” MA thesis, Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1993.

⁴ Robert E. Daggy, “Unsafe in His Goodness: An Inquiry into the Life of Owen Merton” (unpublished manuscript, Thomas Merton Center [TMC] Archives, Louisville, KY) 9.

⁵ Letters from Owen Merton and Ruth Calvert Jenkins to Gertrude Merton, November–December 1913, Evelyn Scott Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

⁶ Two unsourced clippings from the same newspaper, one bearing the handwritten date “1920,” both at TMC. As the first clipping makes a possible allusion to the *Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings Showing the Later Tendencies in Art*, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, April–May 1921, this date could be incorrect.

⁷ Copy at TMC.

⁸ Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *Who was Who in American Art 1564–1975* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1999) vol. 2. On the exhibition as a whole, see Francis Naumann, “The Big Show. The First Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists,” *Artforum* 17 (February 1979) 34–39; (April 1979) 49–53; subsequent references will be cited as “Naumann” parenthetically in the text.

⁹ Acting in breach of this fundamental principle, the organizing committee excluded one work, Marcel Duchamp’s ready-made sculpture *Fountain* (Naumann 37–39).

¹⁰ John Weischel Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington DC (microfilm reel N60–2). Merton had paid \$1 in annual dues to join the Guild in 1916 (John Weischel Papers, microfilm reel N60–1).

¹¹ *The New York Times* [NYT] (21 December 1919) VIII.16.

¹² Clark S. Marlor, *The Salons of America 1922–1936* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1991) 73, 151; *Who was Who in American Art 1564–1975*, vol. 2.

¹³ Evelyn Scott, *Bread and a Sword* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937) 186–93.

¹⁴ Mentioned in a letter to Percyval Tudor–Hart, 21 May 1924 (Richard Bassett Collection): we have not yet ascertained the nature or the precise date of the exhibition in question.

¹⁵ *American Magazine of Art* [AMA] 16.6 (June 1925) [i].

¹⁶ *American Art News* [AAN] 16.28 (20 April 1918) 3.

¹⁷ AAN 17.4 (2 November 1918) 2.

¹⁸ NYT (4 May 1919) VII.12.

¹⁹ NYT (7 November 1920) III.15; AAN 19.5 (13 November 1920) 4.

²⁰ AAN 18.10 (27 December 1919) 3.

²¹ “Father . . . went to New York and had an exhibition. It got a good press and he sold many pictures” (Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948] 19–20).

²² NYT (22 April 1923) VII.7e, attributed to Elizabeth Cary by C. Kay–Scott, 1931: Kay–Scott quotes extracts from several reviews of Merton’s solo shows at the Daniel in “Owen Merton 1885 [sic]–1931,” *The Art Register* (Denver Art Museum) 2.1 (October 1931) 33–35; subsequent references will be cited as “Kay–Scott” parenthetically in the text.

²³ AAN 21.28 (21 April 1923) 2.

²⁴ AMA 16.11 (November 1925) [i].

²⁵ NYT (15 November 1925) VIII.16.

²⁶ *Art News* (14 November 1925).

²⁷ Undated, unsourced clipping, Evelyn Scott Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

²⁸ NYT (? 1925): quoted in Kay–Scott.

²⁹ Margaret Breuning, *New York Post* [1923 or 1925].

³⁰ Helen Read, *Brooklyn Eagle* [1923 or 1925].

³¹ AAN 19.26 (9 April 1921) [1].

³² AAN 19.28 (23 April 1921) 6. See also NYT (24 April 1921) III.14.

³³ Merton was treated generously by the selection committee: 71 artists were represented by fewer than five works, Merton and nine others had five works included, and only seven had more than five works shown.

³⁴ These venues are listed in an unsourced newspaper clipping, TMC, dated “1920” in manuscript.

³⁵ Robert Daggy, “Thomas Merton & the Search for Owen Merton,” unpublished typescript (1993) 10 (TMC).

³⁶ Letters to Marsh from both Owen & Tom are held in the Reginald Marsh papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

³⁷ Kay–Scott 34.

³⁸ See undated copy of letter, Merton to “Mary” [early 1923?], Evelyn Scott Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

³⁹ This paper is a report on work in progress. Comments, suggestions & any further information will be welcome: <collins@deepsouth.co.nz>.