



LOUISE M. KAMP
(1867-1959)

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A LOVELY CONFUSION
Essay by Angela Gaffney-Smith, Curator

A Lovely Confusion



Louise was a quiet, unassuming woman. As a new doctor in Saugerties, New York, Dr. Herman Ash, was befriended by Dr. and Mrs. Kamp. "She didn't talk about her work....she just painted, all the time" according to Ash. The titles of some of her paintings offered a glimpse

into the artists feelings about her subjects: *Shine and Shadow, Glorious Autumn, The Dream Pool, After Glow*. As the wife of Dr. John C. Kamp, Louise was able to afford help in the house and garden. Mrs. Kamp was still responsible for running the house and office while her physician husband worked long days helping patients who weren't always able to pay. Still she would get discouraged that certain days she couldn't paint, "too much time getting dinner" or "days like this...too much housework." Yet despite these restrictions she produced an astonishing body of work in her lifetime. In addition to the paintings sold during her career, she left nearly 3000 paintings upon her



death ranging in size from as small as 2 by 3 inches to more than 2 by 3 feet. Her rapid oil sketches were done primarily on board. Kamp would work quickly, realizing, "I may never get this mood again." Her aim was to capture momentary light with bright color and quick strokes of the brush. Occasionally she would take photos for reference, but preferred the real thing. "I am proud of myself" she admitted after spending an afternoon freezing while painting a snow scene at the Rondout Creek. "I am happiest when I am doing woods in winter," she wrote.

In June of 1933, Louise described the riot of intense colors in her garden: "A lovely confusion...but in harmony." So many colors and shapes filled her view. If she couldn't get outside because of illness or the weather, she would look out the window and study values. For years she kept her studio on Finger Hill near her home in the village of Saugerties. Louise, with her paintbox, could be seen walking the mile and a half west toward the Esopus Creek. She took advantage of the light and peace in this rustic bungalow and the surrounding woods. Eventually she built a summer studio behind her home and added windows to her winter studio on the third floor of the house—all to take advantage of light.

The later work of Kamp's career was concentrated primarily on landscape and still life. Louise Kamp's subjects were the Catskill Mountains and Hudson River; waterways and winding roads around the countryside of Saugerties, Woodstock, Kingston and Palenville. "I am happy when I paint clouds," she wrote. From the Rondout Creek or Glasco on the Hudson River, to Saugerties Esopus Creek - "I love to paint water". She remarked how fine it was to sketch at Malden and described scenes after a day of sketching: The Hudson River was a misty and beautiful faded-blue gray. The sky was a deep purple and yellow trees made contrast. The roof of the farm was a wet black..." Her painting continued as she traveled and was drawn to waterfronts from Noank, Connecticut to Gloucester and Rockport, Massachusetts.

Kamp studied at the New York Art Students League in Buffalo and in 1905-06, received a scholarship award for composition in color. Her work was singled out for reviews in the Buffalo Evening News. Louise M. Kamp also won accolades at the Art Students League in 1906 for her portrait paintings. Louise exhibited 91 paintings in the Society of Artists Rooms at the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY in 1910. Two years later, she displayed 73 works in the Historical Room of the Carnegie Library in Bradford, Pennsylvania. This prolific artist was elected



a member of the Buffalo Fine Art Academy whose home was in the Albright Art Gallery, today known as the Albright-Knox Gallery.

In 1927 and 1937 she exhibited at the Society of Independent Artists Exhibition at Grand Central Palace in New York City. She was in good company with artists such as Milton Avery and Robert Henri. The Society of Independent Artists was modeled after the French, *Société des Artistes Indépendants*. The Society, incorporated in 1916, offered individual artists the opportunity to exhibit regardless of their style and was a response to the status quo of academic art institutions.

In 1939, Louise Kamp was 72 years old and exhibited 72 paintings at the Carnegie Public Library in Saugerties, NY. At the time, she was studying with John F. Carlson, also an alumnus of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy. She continued her education in Woodstock, NY with Carlson, a founder of the Woodstock Artist Association and considered the finest landscape teacher in the United States during the 1930's. Kamp remarked that one of her woodland scenes was something she could not have duly accomplished 30 years before. This was the statement of a woman who was driven and always striving to become a better painter.

Louise Kamp produced a vast amount of work in her lifetime. When she sold a snow scene at the Saugerties Library exhibit, she painted another snow scene to replace it. But when she was asked by a gallery owner in New York to do 100 paintings of one of her popular scenes, she refused, saying she

would never do something like that. In her diaries she described many of her days as wonderful, beautiful and lovely. These words were also used to describe the personality of artist Louise M. Kamp in social clippings about her exhibitions. She was quite generous in her lifetime, often giving away paintings to people who admired their beauty and to local organizations such as the Kingston Hospital, in Kingston, NY.

Louise M. Kamp left a legacy of paintings which document the prominent countryside and unique radiance of the Catskills. She captured, in her quick oil sketches, fleeting moments of local atmosphere. Kamp's marine paintings record the importance of bygone waterfront commerce and activity in the Hudson Valley and northeast United States. She was an artist, a wife and mother. Louise M. Kamp had a calling, a need to paint—to put to board or canvas—beauty and light from her life. The Woodstock School of Art Exhibition acknowledges the talent, energy and perseverance of this remarkable woman.

Angela Gaffney-Smith
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Thank you to Marilyn K. Walker, local poet and granddaughter of Louise M. Kamp. Sources consulted for this essay, in addition to diaries of Louise

Kamp are: *The Society of Independent Artists*, Clark S. Marlor, Noyes Press, Park Ridge NJ, c. 1984; *Landscape Painting*, Birge Harrison, C. Scribner Sons, New York, 1913 (c. 1909); *The Development of American Impressionism*, H. Barbara Weinberg, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY Exhibition Catalog; *American Impressionism and Realism: the Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915*, H. N. Abrams; *The Founders of the Woodstock Artist Association*, Woodstock Artist Association and Museum, c. 2000; *Who Was Who in American Art*, Peter Hastings Falk, ed., Sound View Press, 1985, Madison, CT.



illustrations

cover: *Autumn Wood*

frontispiece: *Night Cabin*

page 1: *Floral*

page 2: *Wreathed in Gold*

page 3: *Wharf*

this page, clockwise from
upper left:

Woodland Stroll,

Gardener,

Red Tug

Glenerie Falls

Stone House

rear cover: *Woodland Stroll* (detail)

photograph of Louise Kamp



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