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The life and work of Leon Kroll with a catalogue of his nudes.  (Volumes I and II)

Davis, Kenneth Morton, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1993
THE LIFE AND WORK OF LEON KROLL
WITH A CATALOGUE OF HIS NUDES

Volume I

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Kenneth Morton Davis

The Ohio State University
1993

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following individuals without whose help this project could not have been completed. To my wife, Carol, whose support and faith will always be remembered I give special thanks and dedicate this dissertation to her. To my doctoral committee at The Ohio State University in the Department of History of Art, including Professors Mathew Herban III and Francis Richardson I will always remember your help extended both on and off campus. To my advisor, Professor Barbara Groseclose, whose guidance and patience will always be lodestars for me, I will always be indebted.

The individuals who over the course of this project that have been of significant help with technical assistance or information about Leon Kroll are gratefully acknowledged. Mrs. Judith Gaitan’s technical help has been of central importance in the completion of this project. Mr. Laurence Casper, formerly of ACA Gallery, New York City, provided photographs of key Kroll paintings along with personal recollections about the artist. Mrs. Viette Kroll, the artist’s wife, Marie-Claude Rose, the artist’s daughter, Ms. Vivien Kroll Altfield, the artist’s niece and Lionel Kroll, the artist’s nephew, who met with my wife shortly before his death, were generous in allowing me to visit the artist’s studio and provided information concerning the location of the artist’s paintings respectively. I would like to thank Ms.
Patricia Jobe Pierce and Mr. John D. Ingraham of the Pierce Galleries, Hingham, Ma. for providing valuable photographs of heretofore less well-known paintings by the artist. Walter and Arlene Deitch, Mr. Robert J. Cummings and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Palitz of New York City, all allowed me to study paintings by Kroll in their collections. Mr. Benjamin Cardozo, Willa and David Lawall also provided early but very important help and for their time and hospitality in allowing me to see many photos and actual works by the artist in the Kroll Estate, I will always be grateful. I also wish to thank Professor Franklin Ludden of the Ohio State University for his suggestions. Ms. Dawna Wallis who did the photography for this dissertation under trying circumstances was also instrumental in its completion.
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1 Introduction

Kenneth Clark, in his comprehensive study of the nude in Western art, wrote: "...the nude is after all, the most serious of all subjects in art." Although his assertion may be debated, the nude is nevertheless one of the oldest and most potentially "charged" subjects in art. Its treatment by an important painter in early twentieth century America, Leon Kroll (1884-1974), is the focus of this study. Although Kroll first became known as an urban realist, he was later primarily recognized for his depictions of the female nude. Since there has never been a study of his nudes—or for that matter, of his oeuvre as a whole—this study will present a critical analysis of Kroll's nudes within the context of his life and work. I shall demonstrate that, taken as a whole, Kroll's work forms an important, if conservative, component in the "Golden Age" of American painting of the nude. As a prologue, in this introduction I will present a thorough discussion of the general art historical literature on the nude and of the assessment of Kroll's nudes in the art historical literature of the twentieth century. Primarily, this study looks at Kroll's nudes within the context of his biography, i.e., chronologically as opposed to psychoanalytically. Special attention will be given to the artist's milieu and to
portrayals of the female nude by other members of his circle. In doing so, this study will consider the influences exerted by popular culture as well as art history and the avant-garde. Specifically, I will show that sources as diverse as fashion advertising, “girlie” magazines, and the Ingres revival as well as the influence of earlier Old Masters such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Diego Velasquez (1599-1660), may be discerned in Kroll’s work. In addition, relationships to artists such as Winslow Homer (1836-1910), Edward Hopper (1882-1967) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954) will be proposed. To enumerate these influences is to illustrate the variety of the artist’s training and the complexity of his work.

The final section of the study will consist of a catalogue of representative nudes from all periods of Kroll’s oeuvre. In the catalogue, I will synthesize and elucidate in greater detail the ideas put forth in the introduction and biographical study. All of the factual, stylistic, and thematic information associated with Kroll’s oeuvre will be brought together for the purpose of seeing the relevant features of his nudes iconographically and stylistically. This catalogue is not a comprehensive catalogue raisonné but rather a presentation of the most important examples of this genre in Kroll’s career.

The obstacles preventing the compilation of a complete catalogue raisonné are several. One is that there are many examples which are either in unknown private collections or have become lost over the years. The lack of specific titles
and/or dates for many of Kroll’s nudes also made an accurate reconstruction of this subject within his œuvre difficult. A photo archive in the possession of the executor of the Kroll Estate, Cardozo and Cardozo of New York, has been helpful however. A recent book on Kroll edited by Nancy Hale and Fredson Bowers is the first attempt to bring together, although not systematically, a representative sampling of the artist’s work, and proved also to be of value.⁴

Although I have examined most of the paintings included in the present catalogue, I have not been able to see them all and have relied on photographs for my analysis in a few instances. In most of these latter cases, the paintings have become lost and are not traceable but exist in reproductions. An example is Kroll’s Nude and Negress of ca. 1932. Although it was reproduced once that year, I can find no other reference to this work since that date.⁴ Most of the photographs have been provided by the galleries which at one time owned the lost paintings in question. I am especially grateful to the ACA Gallery in New York, and Mr. Laurence Casper, the Bernard and S. Dean Levy Gallery also of New York, Mrs. Patricia Jobe Pierce of the Pierce Galleries, Hingham, Massachusetts, and Mr. Donald V. Kiernan of the Marine Arts Gallery, Salem, Massachusetts, as well as several private collectors.

A catalogue of Kroll’s nudes is warranted on the grounds that he is one of the best known and most prolific painters of the nude to have practiced in the
United States; quite often it is his nudes which are singled out for mention in books on American art rather than his earlier urban scenes, landscapes, still-lifes, or portraits. In addition, in many instances the locations, dates, provenances, and bibliographies for his nude paintings have not been established, and my catalogue will fill at least some of these lacunae.

II

Kenneth Clark has called attention to a central paradox of the nude in art historical literature: even though the subject is an old one, there is a very short bibliography on it. Nevertheless, three studies stand out as being especially relevant for discussion of Kroll. The first is Wilhelm Hausenstein’s Der Nackte Mensch in der Kunst Aller Zeiter und Völker (1913). Clark saw Hausenstein’s study as being a “Marxist stew,” despite incorporating much valuable material. Hausenstein attempts to apply the Marxian idea of historical materialism to the interpretation of the nude in art history. He wrote:

Es liegt die Aufgabe vor, zu untersuchen, ob sich diese Methode [des historischen Materialismus] auf die Probleme der Kunstentwicklungsgeschichte anwenden lässt. Gelingt der Versuch - und er ist zweifellos möglich - , dann ist nichts Kleineres angeregt als eine Synthese aller Äusserungsformen menschlicher Kultur: und eine Synthese, die nach den Ursachen und Wirkungen bis zum letzten erfahrbaren Grund der Dinge fragt - bis hin zur Bedeutung der animalischen Existenz.

Hausenstein claimed that it is relatively easy to test this theory on pictures that obviously contain a political content, as for example the work of Honoré
Daumier, William Hogarth, Constance Meunier or Charles de Groux, but that it is more difficult to look for social implications in paintings which exalt pure form and color. By choosing the subject of the nude as his topic of analysis, Hausenstein thought he could more easily come right to the issue, which in his words was: "Haben die Formen wirtschaftlichen, gesellschaftlichen, politischen Lebens auf die Darstellung der menschlichen Formen Einfluss?" ("Do the forms of economic, social, and political life have an influence on the representation of human forms?") He essentially used the nude as the control in his experiment. The nude then has the quality of a "still life" in Hausenstein's view, i.e., an inanimate object. The various epochs, including the industrial age, became the variables in the analysis. He came to the conclusion that because we cannot return to the time before Charles Darwin and Karl Marx, a new religion will center upon the transcendental in everyday life. This new religion cannot be put into metaphysical formulas; its domain is this world, the world of color and form. Color and form thus became more important because that is how we can experience the transcendental in everyday life. A variant of this new transcendental religion can be seen in the work of Auguste Renoir whose nudes also contain an "erotic-religious" or "animalistic" quality which belongs to the new art.

Hausenstein argued for the view that in the twentieth century the portrayed nude became an object among other objects and it is transcendental only to the
extent that the forms and colors are pleasing. The nude does not have symbolic or religious value, as it did in past periods. Form and color, being of this world, can also be thought of as reflecting the materialism of our age. In this view of the nude as a still-life made up of forms and colors, Hausenstein seemed to anticipate the position of many avant-garde artists of the twentieth century, and to a lesser extent the American studio painters who also reflected a concern with seeing the nude in terms of form and colors devoid of symbolic meanings. Finally, to the degree that non-artistic societal forces such as advertising can be shown to have influenced the work of Kroll, then Hausenstein’s ideas are important for a study of Kroll’s nudes.

The first major study of the nude in the English language is Kenneth Clark’s The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form (1957). The term “nude” does not distinguish gender and Clark included a discussion of both the male and female in his study. Although the term as used since the Renaissance has come most often to stand for the nude female, it was the male nude that dominated Classical civilization.¹² Thus Clark saw Hercules as “the ambassador of antiquity to the middle ages as well as to the heavier and more heroic mood of the High Renaissance.”¹³ Clark believed, though, that it was not the expression of energy and emotion (qualities associated with Hercules), but rather the expression of biological or sexual needs that was the most important factor in depicting the nude. Indeed he wrote: “...no nude, however abstract, should fail to arouse in the spectator some vestige
of erotic feeling, even though it be only the faintest shadow and if it does not do so, it is bad art and false morals." Clark furthermore believed that the desire for sexual release is so fundamental a drive that our judgement of pure form is influenced by it. Thus he viewed the artist as an individual who is a voyeurlike figure who provides images of an erotic nature, clothed in "pure form" by which the viewer can gain some sexual satisfaction along with aesthetic pleasure. Clark did qualify his view by pointing out that the naked body can also satisfy other human needs, such as "harmony, energy, ecstasy, humilty, and pathos." But these needs and their satisfaction are not unique to the experience of the nude in art.

In his last chapter, Clark took up the idea of the nude as an end in itself, not as a personification of either a being or an idea. At this point he called attention to the anti-Classical nudes of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. These artists, he said, favored the nude because it lent itself so readily to concepts rather than sensations. In Clark's view, the nude has remained an important subject for the twentieth century artist. In contrast to Sidney Tillim, Clark not only maintained the continued importance of the nude, but also acknowledged the "shock value" of the nude in avant-garde art beginning with the nudes of Vincent van Gogh.

The third book of special interest to this study is William H. Gerdts's *The Great American Nude* (1974). Although Gerdts's comments regarding Kroll and his colleagues will be taken up in detail later, a few general remarks on the subject
of the nude in America as he saw it may profitably be introduced. Like Clark
before him, Gerdts begins by informing the reader of the nude’s importance in
art, declaring that the human figure—male and female—has been consistently the
primary subject matter of the artist.\(^{20}\) He wrote that although the nude enjoyed a
resurgence of interest in European art during the Renaissance and after, the nude
did not enjoy a similar importance in American Art through most of its history
for several reasons. Among these are religious prohibitions, the prudery charac-
teristic of nineteenth century American culture, and the desire to avoid cultural
dominance by Europe.\(^{21}\) Although Gerdts acknowledged the significance of Clark’s
study, he believed that the latter’s categorization of the several types of nudes in
the European tradition is “only tangentially applicable to the nude of American
painting and sculpture.”\(^{22}\) What Gerdts believed is applicable to the study of the
American nude is an understanding of the American attitudes towards the nude,
on the part of artists, critics and the public. These attitudes in turn are based on
the larger issues of American prejudices and tabus as well as the lack of a tradition
of nude painting itself.

The studies of the nude written in the twentieth century by Hausenstein,
Clark, and Gerdts can be important for an understanding of Kroll’s art. With
respect to Hausenstein, I will discuss many of Kroll’s nudes as reflections of the
larger socio-economic institutions within society. From the perspective of Clark,
the genre of the studio nude can be viewed as a “compulsive” subject which afforded many artists the opportunity to explore formal problems during the “second golden age” of the studio nude. In Kroll’s own thinking, the solving of formal problems was one of the most important tasks an artist could undertake. Finally, Gerdts’ study is of importance for calling attention—by default—to the problem of defining what an “academic nude” is.

III

References to Kroll’s art over his long career are quite varied. With respect to his nudes in particular, several early writers on Kroll do not mention them but those that do usually seem to take an extreme position. Moreover, there are very few references to Kroll in recent years which do not comment upon them.25 The paintings of nudes are most often referred to as being “academic” with no thematic or stylistic analysis accompanying the comment.

The first reference to Kroll’s nudes is in 1930 by Ivan Narodny in his book entitled American Artists.26 Kroll is one of ten artists to each of whom the author devoted a rather short chapter dealing with the salient features of his art. In Narodny’s view, for Kroll, chief among these is the importance of women in his subject matter. Narodny observed:

Kroll evidently feels and understands women more profoundly than he does men. His figures and portraits of women are far more feminine and alluring than his pictures of men are masculine. Woman is, at any
rate, a far more pictorial model than man, in the romantic conception of Kroll’s paintings. Nonetheless, he has little to say about the nudes other than they are “sensuous but not obscene,” and can thus be compared to women as they appear in the fiction of Maupassant and Balzac. (Narodny’s view that women are more “pictorial” than men will be discussed later.)

Also in 1930 there appeared an article on Kroll by Walter Gutman, one of the more well known critics of his day, who wrote extensively on American art in the pages of Art in America. Like Narodny, Gutman saw Kroll in relationship to an earlier writer. In this case it was the English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson. He saw in Kroll’s work Tennyson’s “dim gorgeousness of coloring, the same solemnity, the same sad sensuality.” Although Gutman’s connection of Kroll to Tennyson may seem arbitrary, Gutman’s article is important for his comments on Kroll’s nudes. He is by far the most specific of all writers on Kroll in calling attention to the artist’s special type of nude:

And as the first [Tennyson] had wonderfully vast ideas, so the second [Kroll] has unbelievably sumptuous models. Not even Ziegfield in his luckiest moments was able to find such stately moving creatures, such slowly bending backs, such mobile thoraxes on such voluptuous stomachs, such long and roundly muscled limbs, such wide and balanced cheeks, such grand, straight noses, such heads on which the hair is swept over the ears and tied in great pendant bundles.

In addition, Gutman is the first to see in Kroll’s nudes a connection to the popular culture of his day in the form of advertising—fashion advertising in
particular. Gutman further wrote: "It [Kroll's painting] is a vision of female beauty, kind, somnolent, sensual, on whose rare simulacrums the great dress houses and fashion magazines have built their businesses." Of Kroll's Dorothy, of 1925, he noted, "In color, in the accessories and in feeling it has that good breeding and indifference so popular in our advertisements, and which would make her a perfect Bath-sheba [sic] if that incident were to be put into a sophisticated movie." Gutman is also of interest in being the only writer to mention specifically Kroll in connection with Matisse—a connection which this writer sees as valid—though he does so only in a very brief comment on some background color in a painting by Kroll whose date and location are presently unknown. But in the end, Gutman does not pursue the relationships he postulates either to Tennyson, to Matisse, or to popular culture. And, despite seeing Kroll as related to Tennyson, Gutman saw him also as being "banal" and even inadvertently "comic" in some of his paintings. This ambivalence concerning Kroll's nudes will be seen in other writers, as well.

The next reference to Kroll occurred in the year 1933 in the form of a dictionary entry and essentially does not open up any new issues with respect to the artist. Rather it seems to summarize the ideas of Narodny in particular. The anonymous writer stated:

The subjects in which Kroll attempts to express this philosophy [his love of life] are varied—landscapes, still-life, figure studies, portraits. A characteristic and felicitous design of the artist is the use of groups of people in a landscape. His paintings of women are particularly satisfactory, either because of a profound understanding of them, or because
like Narodny this writer called attention to the unique “pictorial attributes” of the female nude and Kroll’s success in his paintings of women. In fact it has been argued by Lynda Nead, in 1983, that these “pictorial attributes” only noted by Narodny, oftentimes express sensuality and are thus socio-culturally determined, rather than inherent in a given subject such as the female nude. \(^{35}\)

A later reference to a Kroll nude occurred in the year 1936 when Alan Burroughs referred to Kroll and Eugene Speicher in relation to George Bellows. But unlike C. J. Bulliet (1930), who also related Kroll to Bellows, Burroughs emphasized the academic nature of Kroll’s art:

> Compared to Bellows, his friends Eugene Speicher and Leon Kroll must seem mild and even academic in their efforts. Suavity takes the place of ruthless energy in their work, perhaps because of other influences from abroad. At least Kroll’s Babette (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York) recalls the work of Laurens, the academician. \(^{37}\)

For the most part Burroughs was content to see Kroll within the context of academic art and, in this respect, he was similar to Frank Jewett Mather, Charles Rufus Morey, and William James Henderson, whose The American Spirit in Art appeared in 1927. These writers wrote that Kroll “began as a facile painter in the tradition of the academic fine technicians, but arrested his course in view of the simpler and harder vision of the Modernists.” They continued: “Kroll has made his problem that of figure composition in the open air, seeking mass through the maximum of pure color without conventional shadows or accents.” \(^{38}\)
Edward Alden Jewell, writing in 1939, is the first to mention Kroll in relation to such painters of the nude as Alexander Brook (1898-1980) and Henry McFee (1886-1953). He linked Alexander Brook’s *Southern Girl* (c. 1930s), Henry McFee’s *Sleeping Black Girl* (c. 1930s), and Kroll’s *Seated Nude* (1933-34), claiming that they all have the “mellowness of classic tradition.” Jewell, like Gutman, did not give a date or location for any of his examples. One can only hazard a guess as to which *Seated Nude* by Kroll he is citing; most likely, it is the example in the Metropolitan Museum which was well known by 1939.

Jerome Mellquist, in 1942, although not writing specifically about Kroll’s nudes, did call attention to Kroll’s style in general by asserting that there “is only one thing to note about Kroll: his work always says National Academy of Design and has no other recommendations for sensitive people.” This statement raises questions as to the nature of the style associated with the National Academy. Were all the leading figure painters in the United States who were associated with the Academy characterized by a uniform style, or were just the artists who taught there characterized by such a style? This question and others of a similar nature will be addressed in the catalogue.

References to Kroll in the literature continued unabated after 1945. He was included in the series of books put out by the American Artists Group in 1946. This is essentially a picture book with a brief introduction by the artist, and
contains no analysis of his works. Of the approximately fifty illustrations, only five are paintings of nudes.41 The following year Kroll had a one-man exhibition at French & Company in New York. It was his first one-man exhibition in ten years and contained a full representation of Kroll’s work. One reviewer, anonymous, was most impressed with the figure paintings, as he wrote: “...a few of the smaller, more directly recorded figure studies ... represented the really vital elements in a preeminently virtuoso show.”42 However the writer does not single out examples illustrative of these “vital elements.”

About four months later, in June of 1947, Kroll was the subject of an article in the popular magazine Life. In it he is referred to as “the dean of U.S. nude painters.”43 His inclusion in this magazine suggests his connection to popular culture and the editors’ estimate of, at least, his potential for a wide appeal among the public. Illustrated in the article are examples of Kroll’s nudes primarily from the 1930s and 1940s. They appear quite at home with the ads in the magazine featuring wholesome and attractive young women. Unfortunately, there is no discussion of the individual works, nor for that matter are any dates or locations given for the paintings. Kroll is quoted as saying in reference to his nudes that “...they are not just sexy representations ... heroic and handsome, that’s the way women look to me.”44 Individual works selected for inclusion in the Life article will be discussed later in the Catalogue.
The significance of Kroll’s nudes was evaluated in John I. H. Baur’s book, *Revolution and Tradition in American Art*, in 1951. In his observations, Baur did not refer to Kroll’s purported academicism, but rather to his “monumental compositions” that rely on simplification of the volumes of the body. He mentioned Kroll, along with Rockwell Kent and Guy Pène du Bois (1884-1958), as painting figures with “metallic surfaces but with a classical breadth and repose which conveys a sense of romantic feeling.” Also writing in the 1950s was Milton Brown. Unlike Baur, but like Mellquist, he found nothing of a positive nature to say about Kroll’s figure style after 1920, referring to Kroll’s work with such negative phrases as “stilted refinement, powdered artificiality and academic formula.”

In 1965 Henry Geldzahler called attention to Kroll’s “beautifully analyzed and constructed formal presentation of the power and shape of the female body.” Geldzahler continued:

If the technique is academic in the positive sense of the word (informed with the knowledge of accepted values and procedures), the spirit and celebration of the subject are far from academic in a dusty sense. Kroll once wrote that he favored ‘motifs that are warm with human understanding.’ The appeal of his work continues to lie in its warmth and simplicity.

Geldzahler, like Jewell and Baur before him, stressed the positive aspects of Kroll’s style which was, he said, academic rather than classical. Geldzahler is the first to attribute “warmth” to Kroll’s nudes.

Some later writers evaluated Kroll in quite different terms than did
Geldzahler. Emily Genauer, writing in 1967, saw Kroll’s nudes as being “cool” and “remote” in their “fastidious aloofness.”

Kroll responded to Renoir’s monumental nudes—but he has always kept his own nudes cool, serene, a little remote, their contours accented not because form needed definition or containing, but because, one has the feeling, strong outlines held them off a bit, established a fastidious aloofness.

Robert Pincus-Witten, writing in 1971, called attention to Kroll’s “enormous public reception” in the 1930s. He nevertheless felt “revulsion” for Kroll’s nudes, referring to them, like Brown, as being “facile” and “quasi-Ingriste” as well as “academic.” His comments concerning Kroll’s earlier work will be for later discussion.

Other writers have also recently called attention to Kroll’s figure painting in the history of twentieth century American art. Patricia Hills and Roberta Tarbell, in The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (1980), refer to his position within the genre of “the studio picture.” Although their reference is very brief, Kroll’s well known Nude in a Blue Chair (1930) is one of the very few pictures illustrated in color on a full page; however, rather puzzlingly, they do not really analyze the painting or discuss Kroll. A year later, in 1981, Peter Selz, in Art in Our Times: A Pictorial History 1890-1980, contrasted and compared Kroll, Matisse, Picasso, Leger, Delvaux, and Adolf Ziegler in his section on figure painting in the 1930s. He, like Gerdts, called attention to the painter’s “feeling of simple humanity and warmth in a painting entitled [Seated] Nude (1933-34, Metropolitan
Museum) typical of much of the figurative work being done in the United States at the time."53

The critic Barbara Gallati, in her exhibition review of 1981, focused on one of those "quasi-Ingriste sticky nudes" that Pincus-Witten had condemned. Her specific comments stressed the formal complexities of a Kroll nude:

Kroll's canvas [Sleeping Venus] can only be described as an academic nude. Yet the elegant contours and the dynamic torsion of the model's pose combine to avoid the staleness that is a constant threat to every studio nude. In addition, the subtle dissonance of several tones of blue that shift across the canvas, the fine still-life elements and the busy pattern of the wallpaper help maintain a forceful visual tension.54

Although, like many writers before her, Gallati referred to Kroll's painting as academic, she also felt that Sleeping Venus (location unknown) had "the force of a newly discovered painting," i.e., something fresh. She attributes this not only to the pose, but to the rarity of seeing Kroll's work.55

In the 1980s, interest in Kroll appeared to revive. The most extensive book on Kroll to date, Leon Kroll: A Spoken Memoir (1983), was edited by Nancy Hale and Fredson Bowers. They have brought together for the first time a selection of the artist's memoirs, along with a representative sampling of his work. However, as is the case with much of the literature on Kroll, the format permits no analysis of his work. Another reference to Kroll's nudes, this time in a periodical, occurred in 1986 when the artist was included in an article on the "25 Most Undervalued American Artists." In addition, another version of Sleeping Venus (ACA Gallery,
New York) was featured on the cover of the magazine in which the article appeared.

In their discussion of the artist, Marissa Banks, Lorraine Glennon and Jeffrey Schaie referred to both his connection to academic art and his nudes:

Ten years ago, histories of American art dismissed Kroll’s work as representing ‘compromises with academicism’; for decades, his suggestive but strange paintings looked dated and coy. But young artists have ‘grandfathered’ Kroll back in, so to speak.\textsuperscript{56}

The authors here are referring to the close parallels that can be found between superrealist paintings of the female nude in the 1970s by such artists as Arne Besser (1935- ) and Kroll’s work. This idea will be explored more fully in the catalog entry on Kroll’s Zelda of 1930.

The most recent reference to Kroll occurred in connection with an exhibition of drawings entitled \textit{Seeing Women} held at the University of Pennsylvania in 1991.\textsuperscript{57} The exhibition did not focus exclusively on the nude and Kroll was represented by a drawing entitled \textit{Head of a Young Woman} (1933, Susan and Herbert Adler Collection, Scarsdale, N.Y.). Catherine Gilbert, after her general comment on Kroll as a “bright star of American art in the 20s and 30s,” recalls ideas expressed by Walter Gutman more than sixty years before in calling attention to the “impossible beauty” of Kroll’s idealized head study, and the relationship it has to such actresses as Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo and to advertising as well as to Kroll’s wife, Viette.\textsuperscript{58} Her ideas are not unimportant, and they will be taken up...
more thoroughly in the present study.

From the sparse literature on Kroll's figure painting several conclusions can be drawn. References to Kroll remain constant, though limited, during the years 1927-91. Most of the favorable responses to Kroll's nudes, however, appear after 1945. In other words, despite Kroll's early fame, it appears that the most significant critical approval for his nudes occurred following the ascendancy of the avant-garde after World War II. More specifically, the most positive references to Kroll's nudes occur during the rise of Pop Art. Within the literature on Kroll after 1945, a change of focus can also be discerned. No longer is his "facile" academic technique stressed, but the structural qualities of his compositions, coupled with the human characteristics of his figures, are noted. Remember, it is Baur who first called attention to Kroll's structural sensibility (1951) and Geldzahler (1965) was the first to notice the "warmth" and "human understanding" within his figures. Gerdts (1974) reiterated the ideas of Baur and Geldzahler by observing both Kroll's "structural sense" and "warmth and beauty" of the female form, and Selz (1980) used the same word as both Gerdts and Geldzahler—"warmth"—in describing the affect of Kroll's nudes. Pincus-Witten (1971) occupies the most ambiguous position within the Kroll literature, in my opinion. Although he attacks Kroll's nudes, describing them as "facile" and "sticky," he found certain figure paintings to be "remarkable" in the quality of drawing and insight.
From this survey of the literature on Kroll, we may conclude that the artist’s position in American art continues to be problematic, even controversial. Several questions in particular are suggested by the literature. How can the diverse reactions to Kroll’s art in the literature be explained? Why do some writers regard his nudes with “revulsion” while others think of them as “warm and humanistic?” Is there a chronological development of “warm, humanistic” nudes that relates to the “facile and sticky,” or for that matter, to the “cool and aloof” nudes? Finally, are Kroll’s nudes in fact “sensual” as seen by Gutman, or “prudish” as in Matthew Baigell’s estimation? Perhaps the answers lie in the realization that the figure paintings of Leon Kroll are complex and are not categorized easily by type or period as previous writers seem to suggest. It is my anticipation that with this study the above questions can be answered, and a more balanced assessment of the artist’s nudes will emerge.
NOTES


2 The reference here is to the nude statuettes from the Paleolithic period such as the *Venus of Willendorf* (ca. 25,000-20,000 B.C., Natural History Museum, Vienna).


4 *Creative Art* 11 (October 1932), 147.

5 Clark, p. vii.

6 Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Der Nackte Mensch in Der Kunst Aller Zeiten und Völker* (München, 1913), p. 10: “The task lies before us to investigate whether this method (historical materialism) can be applied to the problems of the history of the development of art. If our attempt is successful—which is without doubt possible—then nothing less will be evoked than a synthesis of all forms of human culture: and a synthesis which questions the causes and effects down to the final experiencable reason, cause of animal existence.”

7 Hausenstein, p. 12.

8 Hausenstein, p. 13.

9 Hausenstein, p. 13. The view of the female body as an object (traditionally related to fruit) has a long history and predates Hausenstein and/or the avant-garde. Kroll’s references to this tradition of objectifying the female form—both verbally and pictorially—will be discussed later. I am taking for granted the reader’s awareness of this sexist tradition and will not treat it more fully here but will discuss it later as the need arises in relation to Kroll. Kroll, like other painters of the female body such as Degas, reflected typical male and class biases in his depiction of the nude. See Richard Thompson, *Degas: The Nudes* (New York, 1988), p. 10.
10 Hausenstein, p. 192. The so-called studio painters seem to occupy a middle position between the Marxian concern for "everyday life" and the avant-garde's concern for pure form and color. Actually the emphasis on pure form and color was the way the avant-garde was able to avoid the materialism of everyday life, without necessarily intending to arrive at the transcendental in everyday life. For a reference to "the artist's increasing isolation from normal social relationships" characteristic of the studio picture see Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1980), pp. 73-74. For the social implications of the "studio picture" also see Milton W. Brown, American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression (Princeton, N.J., 1955), p. 154.

11 Hausenstein, p. 593.


14 Clark, p. 8.

15 Clark, p. 8.


17 Clark, p. 9.

18 Clark, pp. 351, 358. See Albert Elsen, Origins of Modern Sculpture (New York, 1974), p. 14. Elsen states that "it was the old academic idea that the nude was perennially modern which linked Rodin, progressives, and conservatives."

19 Clark, p. 342. Tillim asserted that "when the nude could no longer shock, abstract art became the public's substitute for scandal ..." See Sidney Tillim, "Nude in American Painting at Brooklyn Museum," Arts Magazine, 36 (December 1961), 43. For further discussion of women in Van Gogh's oeuvre see


21 Gerdts, pp. 9-10.

22 Gerdts, p. 9.

23 Gerdts, p. 91.


25 The most notable exception was the large exhibition in 1970 at the Danenberg Galleries. The catalogue does not list one nude. See The Rediscovered Years: Leon Kroll, intro. by Bernard Danenberg (Bernard Danenberg Gallery, New York, November 10-28, 1970), 16 pp.

27 Narodny, p. 87.

28 Narodny, p. 87.


30 Gutman, p. 299.

31 Gutman, 299-300.

32 Gutman, 300.

33 Gutman, p. 300.

34 Gutman, p. 300.

35 Index of Twentieth Century Artists, 1 (September 1933 - October 1934), 59. See no. 28, above for reference to sexism.


42 “Exhibition at French and Co.,” Art News, 45 (February 1947), 51.

44 Life, p. 67.

45 John I. H. Baur, Revolution and Tradition in American Art (Cambridge, Ma., 1951), pp. 87-89.

46 Baur, pp. 87-89.

47 Baur, p. 89.


55 Gallati, 20.


58 Gilbert, pp. 11, 18.

2 Life and Work

Kroll was born on December 6, 1884, in New York City and given the name Abraham Leon. He was one of eight children, six of whom were to become professionally involved in the arts. The future artist grew up in a frame house on 109th Street, not far from Central Park—a site that was to be an important one in his future work. His father’s family had come to America prior to the Civil War from what was then Prussia, near Königsberg. His great-grandfather was a teacher of algebra, while his father, who was primarily a businessman, also played the cello in an orchestra. Kroll’s father was born Jewish but did not observe his religion formally. Kroll followed his father’s example in this respect, but unlike the elder Kroll, he did not identify himself with the capitalistic values his father held, particularly the idea that the pursuit of material wealth is a worthy goal. Concerning artists, the elder Kroll said, “An artist is a man who should expect to be supported all his life and who should not make money out of his work.” But the elder Kroll’s love of music lastingly influenced his son’s work, even though he did not endorse his son’s desire to become a professional artist.

Although Jewish like her husband and even distantly related to him, Kroll’s mother was of French origin and differed from her husband in several ways. Her ancestors traced their family back to the twelfth century, where they were living
in the town of Troyes. At that time they were known as rabbinical scholars. She seems to have been more religious than her husband, for she felt badly when she saw that her children were not following their faith. She appears also to have been as creative as her husband, and she made beautiful tapestries. Perhaps it was from his mother that Kroll received his artistic gifts and encouragement, while from his father he may have received his interest in mathematics and music. His interest in mathematics culminated later in a fascination with Dynamic Symmetry (which has been termed by some a "pseudo-science").

It was at the age of eleven, in 1895, that the young artist received his first true encouragement. When he was quite old, he reminisced as to how this came about: "Aside from the fact that I was desperately in love with my school teacher, she made me realize that my love of drawing was something valuable and important. Of course it made me love her all the more—this 'older woman in my life.' But it was not until he was fifteen, in 1899, that his "fate was sealed, by, of all people my ninety-four-year-old grandfather who I never dreamed was even aware of my desire to become an artist. But one day he called me near him, and blessed me. Then he looked at me and said 'you stick to painting!'—just like that, he said it." It was then that Kroll realized that if he were to become an artist he would have to associate himself with one. He took his school drawings and went to see C.Y. Turner (1850-1919), the President of the Art Student's League (1900-01),
who was about to hire fifteen artists for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. He received a job from Turner in 1899 doing drawings for the designs of the exposition.

Turner's first important mural appointment came in 1892 when he became the assistant to Frank D. Millet who was the Director of the mural painters for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1892. Turner's murals were of a historical nature, quite realistic, often dealing with "Puritan" subjects. According to James Watrous, they contain "not a jot of allegory." Watrous believes that in this respect Turner stands out from the general tradition of mural painting in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, as exemplified, for instance, in the work of Edwin Abbey, John La Farge and Edwin Blashfield. This early exposure to mural painting was probably an important factor in Kroll's facility in this medium thirty-five years later during the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Although it is not certain how long Kroll worked for Turner, by 1901 he had left his employ and enrolled at the Art Student's League. Although Kroll's enrollment at the League was of short duration, the influence of one of his teachers there, John Twachtman (1853-1902), was of considerable importance to him in several respects. First, his contact with Twachtman was the young artist's first major exposure to a professional artist working in a somewhat avant-garde manner
for that time and place. And, more specifically, Twachtman's high-keyed palette probably influenced one of Kroll's earliest landscapes from this time.\textsuperscript{14} An interest in landscape, of course, was to reemerge in Kroll's later arcadian paintings and it continued to evolve along with other aspects of his work. Another important predilection which, in part, derived from Twachtman was for the subject of the winter landscape.\textsuperscript{15} The late nineteenth century urban and rural snow picture was continued, though modified, by Kroll, as well as by other early urban realists of the twentieth century.

Another artist with whom Kroll studied at the League was Bryson Burroughs (1869-1934).\textsuperscript{16} Burroughs' later painting was in an idyllic vein, as can be seen in \textit{The Age of Gold} (Fig. 1; 1913, Newark Museum), although it is not certain that he was painting similar arcadian subjects when Kroll was at the League. Kroll maintained contact with Burroughs at least until 1919, the date of a letter Kroll wrote to Burroughs outlining his esthetic principles.\textsuperscript{17} Their relationship is significant also because Burroughs, in his capacity as curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1909-1934), was instrumental in bringing the work of his teacher Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) to greater American attention with an exhibition of the French painter's work in 1915. Kroll's later interest in Puvis's Boston murals might have been initiated by Burroughs. Kroll also studied at the League with Charles C. Curran (1861-1942). Available evidence suggests
that Curran's art, like that of Burroughs, was idyllic in subject, an example being *Delphiniums Blue* (Fig. 2; n.d., Private Collection).\(^\text{18}\) The only discernible connections to Kroll's later work are Curran's predilection for *plein air* scenes emphasizing young women. In any event, the learning experiences Kroll had with Turner, Twachtman, Burroughs, and Curran prior to his tenure at the National Academy were very important in the formation of Kroll's artistic *Weltanschauung*. Specifically, his exposure to mural painting, the snow picture, and the arcadian picture were all taken up and extensively explored later in Kroll's career.

In 1903, Kroll received increased pressure from his family to abandon his study of art and go into business with his brother Cornelius, who was an engineer. The inducement was a share in the family factory, which made labor-saving devices. He tried to comply by providing the architectural drawings for the machines, but this attempt lasted only six months; he gave up his inheritance and broke with his father.\(^\text{19}\)

Kroll enrolled in the National Academy of Design later that same year. This decision possibly was due to the loss of Twachtman at the Art Student's League the year before, but the influence of Burroughs and the break with his father may also have contributed to it. With this move, the artist began a relationship that was to last some seventy years and that would indelibly color the public's and the art world's perception of him.\(^\text{20}\) His instructors at the Academy were Hermon Atkins
MacNeil (1866-1947) in sculpture, Charles Frederick William Mielatz (1864-1919) in printmaking, and Francis Coates Jones (1857-1932) and George Willoughby Maynard (1843-1923) in painting. Whether he was able to take any courses with other faculty members, such as Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), Howard Pyle (1853-1911), and Will H. Low (1853-1932), who were better known and with whom he would share a common interest in arcadian and romantic subject matter, is not known. Certainly he must have been influenced by their presence. Pyle’s drawings of Arthurian subjects, ca. 1900, were attractively different from the impressionistic subjects of Twachtman. Low’s illustrations for a book entitled In Arcady, ca. 1903, reflect an interest in idyllic scenes which was later shared by Kroll. And finally, Cox, even in such an early painting as An Eclogue (Fig. 3; 1890, National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.), presented idyllic scenes which are similar to Kroll’s in subject and in their emphasis on the female nude. In Cox’s book, The Classic Point of View (1911), he states that he was interested in “the essential rather than the accidental, the eternal rather than the momentary, the love of impersonality more than personality.” The quality of impersonality, a controversial factor in much of Kroll’s later figure work, was encouraged perhaps by the artist’s contact with Cox.

During Kroll’s student years another event occurred which is of great significance for an understanding of his work—his meeting with the American painter
Winslow Homer (1836-1910) in 1907, when Kroll was twenty-two. Kroll’s friend, the American Impressionist Abel Warshawsky (1883-1962), described how he invited Kroll up to Prout’s Neck, Maine, where Warshawsky had previously met Homer. Kroll, in his own Memoirs, also wrote about the encounter. After Kroll had shown several pictures to the aged artist, including some portraits, the latter said: “Do figures my boy, leave rocks to your old age. They’re easy.” Kroll later wrote: “I never met him again, but it was one of the significant incidents of my life, really—a charming incident.”

Kroll’s encounter with Homer is of importance for an understanding of Kroll’s later work from the years after 1918 when he started to paint nudes and bathers on rocks. Although it is not known what Homer paintings Kroll was able to see during their “two or three meetings,” or on his visit to the Boston Museum with Warshawsky and his sister Bertha, Kroll shares a great deal with Homer. That Homer’s influence commences in Kroll’s work about ten years after their meeting should cause no surprise. Kroll remarked later in life, for example, how he remembered something Homer had told him thirty-eight years earlier which he incorporated into an “enormous” mural he was working on for the city of Worcester, Massachusetts:
He [Homer] saw one of the sea sketches that I'd done up there [Prout's Neck]. He said, 'My boy, you've got too many waves. If you want to do a great sea, use only two waves.' And here, I had about six in this sketch of mine, thirty-eight years later. I made a new sketch, a dramatic sketch, of the yellow deck with the blue-black sea and sky and the smoke coming up—it made a wonderful design—and the sixteen inch guns. And I put in just two waves.27

But Homer was most important to Kroll because he encouraged him to work with the figure, and Homer, like Kroll, tended to idealize his female subjects. Although Lloyd Goodrich claimed, "Homer never idealized women to the extent that most of his contemporaries did,"28 he went on to say that Homer's women "were all young and attractive in their various ways—the dashing, romantic brunette, the buxom blonde of the strongly Anglo-Saxon type that Homer particularly favored. Seldom do we see an older woman or a plain one."29 Kroll's women, too, are most often attractive, robust and young, with the impersonal look about them favored by Homer. However, although Homer was very concerned with presenting the figure in the context of nature, he differed from Kroll by often showing nature and figure in conflict, and never did Homer present the female nude in nature. More specific relationships between Homer and Kroll's paintings will be discussed later.

Upon returning to New York, Kroll continued with his studies at the Academy. In 1908, he received the Ella Mooney Traveling Scholarship, enabling him to study in Europe. While in Paris, the painter enrolled in classes at the Academy Julian under Jean-Paul Laurens (1838-1921). Although Laurens was one of the last major exponents of the idea of grande peinture,30 Kroll was also influ-
enced by more avant-garde ideas. He remembered for example when he saw his first Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) in a shopkeeper’s window in 1909 and how it affected him:

While I was in Paris I met some of the good painters, but I was still a product of the Academy. One of the things that’s interesting, I think, from that angle: in 1909 I walked down to Rue Lafitte, which at that time was the great art center, and I saw two pictures in a window. I entered the shop and looked at the pictures. They were all by the same man. I’d never heard of him. The man who was there (I thought he was the janitor) never bothered me. I picked up the pictures and I looked at them. I was there for an hour. Then I looked at the name: Cézanne. And that’s the way I discovered Cézanne. Then later, when I was going to see a number of his pictures, I was definitely influenced for some time by him, just as I was by the Impressionists for a while, but I discarded both in the forming of my own kind of painting personality.31

Indeed, the following year saw him working in an Impressionistic manner at various locations in France.32 An impressionist element can be discerned in an idyllic work containing many figures seated outdoors entitled A Lovely Day (Fig. 4; 1910, Destroyed). Although the clothing is contemporary, with realistic likenesses, the spirit is idyllic. This painting was completed while Kroll was a student at the Académie Julien. The artist referred to this work as a “very large canvas in bright, broken Impressionist color, as I was very interested in those men, Alfred Sisley, Pierre Auguste Renoir, and Camille Pissarro.”33 When the artist showed the painting to his teacher Laurens, the latter replied: “Well, I can’t tell you anything about this [Impressionist] color. I don’t understand it. But I can about the composition.”34 Kroll later observed:
All he would say was ‘Pas mal. Continuez.’ That’s all. That’s about all he ever said to me, except when he came to my studio, he gave me a very good criticism on composition. Laurens knew that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing, and all he did was to encourage me to go ahead. I thought it was very intelligent. He was a wonderful old fellow.35

Kroll was quite successful at the Académie Julien. Will H. Low, Chairman of the National Academy of Design Committee, reported:

As his predecessor [Maurice Sterne] was able to win five out of six possible prizes at the Julian School in Paris, so in his turn Mr. Kroll has won the most important prize for which all the various ateliers which compose it competed.36

Winning prizes and governmental commissions was to be characteristic of Kroll’s career for almost thirty more years. In addition to his formal studies at the Academy, Kroll took some time for travel during his student years of 1908-10. He mentioned in his Memoirs that he was in Berlin and Kassel during these years and that he was “tremendously impressed by the pictures at Dresden.”37

With the end of his scholarship drawing near, the artist returned to the United States in 1910 bringing with him the knowledge gained in Laurens’s atelier, in his independent discovery of Impressionism and Cézanne, and in the experience of his travels. Europe had struck a responsive chord in Kroll and he was to return there several more times in the course of his career.

Soon after his return, Kroll began teaching at the Academy and was given his first one-man exhibition in its galleries.38 The show consisted of work done abroad and in the United States immediately after his return. Included in the
exhibition were the first of his pictures of New York bridges, a popular subject with which he dealt frequently for the next five years. Kroll also painted other aspects of the urban environment at this time, such as the buildings, streets, and rail yards of the city. But Frank Mather's review of the exhibition stressed the evolution Kroll's work reflected during the relatively short period in which he held the Mooney Fellowship in Europe rather than any of the New York pictures. Mather began by calling attention to smoothly painted, drab and “uninteresting” canvases such as River in Normandy and then described Kroll's discovery of Vernon, a town in which Claude Monet (1840-1926) painted. Color, light and thickly applied paint, characterized the work Kroll did there. He concluded the review by observing that the artist “may not yet have found himself, but he is traveling fast on the road to [doing] so.”

It would appear that Mather chose not to deal with what was to become the best known work included in the show, the view of the Brooklyn Bridge which Kroll had painted shortly after his return and which caught the attention of George Bellows, who attended the exhibition.

Entitled The Brooklyn Bridge (Fig. 5; 1910, Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund Hyman Collection), this painting expresses an early twentieth century love of technology and power in the churning water from the tugboat, the skyscrapers in the left distance, and the immense spans of the bridge itself. Human presence is implied by the activity of the boat as it fights the water's current as well as by the evidence
of man's labor in the creation of the bridge and skyscrapers. But man himself is not present. The dark underside of the bridge looms overhead, dwarfing everything underneath it. The skyscrapers, standing in the distance, appear to have a kind of supernatural light on them, as they glow like candles. In his treatment of the tall building, Kroll created an obelisk-like quality that foreshadowed some of the work of the Precisionists.\textsuperscript{41}

Another example of this subject from about the same time is Kroll's Queensborough Bridge (Fig. 6; 1912, Leon Kroll Estate). In this painting, Kroll continued the nineteenth century tradition of the snow scene, in which emphasis is placed on value contrast to produce two-dimensional relationships. He created a dramatic effect counteracting this planarity by a diagonal sweep of the bridge into space. The oblique view of The Brooklyn Bridge (Fig. 5) is continued in the Queensborough Bridge (Fig. 6), as is the motif of the tugboat. In the Queensborough Bridge, however, Kroll has given increased importance to the figure by presenting four men in the foreground, two of whom are shoveling snow into a wagon on the left. In the middleground are more snow shovelers on top of a pier. And in the upper distance on the right are some snow dumpers in the process of emptying their loads of snow from horse-drawn wagons. The falling snow, along with the whiteness of the smoke, creates a sense of the poetic in this otherwise stark but poignant urban winter scene.
In a third example, The Bridge—Winter (Fig. 7; 1915, Tulsa City-County Library, Tulsa, OK.), Kroll still emphasized the works of man but, as in Queensborough Bridge, the figures are shown at work in the middle distance pulling on ropes. This painting most likely marks the end of Kroll’s treatment of the urban bridge theme, although he was later to do some landscapes with bridges.42

In the same year that Kroll painted the first of his bridge pictures, he met two artists who were to become his very close friends, and through whom he was to meet other painters: George Bellows (1882-1925) and Randall Davey (1887-1964). He wrote in his Memoirs that he met them at his exhibition at the Academy in 1910, where Bellows was greatly impressed with The Bridge. Kroll’s connection to Bellows during the next fifteen years is important not only socially but artistically as well. Indeed, Bellows’s The Bridge, Blackwell’s Island (Fig. 8; 1909, Toledo Museum of Art) anticipates Kroll’s The Brooklyn Bridge of 1910. Bellows showed the Queensborough Bridge from below, as Kroll did the Brooklyn Bridge. Both pictures depict a tugboat passing underneath with docks and figures in the foreground. In both works, the bridge makes a dramatic contrast against the lighter tones of the background. Although Bellows’s work is looser in the application of the pigment to the canvas, and individual forms are not as precisely defined, the main difference between the two paintings is in the treatment of the backgrounds. In Bellows’s painting the background consists of ordinary, drab factories and warehouses
and he does not seem to glorify the city as Kroll did in The Brooklyn Bridge, but rather painted it as it was. Kroll, as the discussion of The Brooklyn Bridge (Fig. 5) has shown, treated his buildings in a more romantic vein, giving them a glowing quality.

In comparing Kroll’s work at this time to the artists of the Robert Henri (1865-1929) circle who had earlier dealt with similar subjects, one sees that Kroll’s work stands out on the basis of its color. As J. Gray Sweeney has noted:

Kroll’s bravura handling of paint is similar in some respects to Bellows, particularly in the rendering of the rocky cliff [in Terminal Yards, 1913 (Flint Inst.)] at left. But Kroll’s European training (he studied in Paris with Twachtman) [sic] made him more conscious of the subtleties of form and color than Bellows. The influence of Impressionism is obvious in the purplish shadow cast across the foreground. The modulation of color and light creates a beautiful and appealing mood, bearing little relationship to the grimy actualities of a railroad terminal.\(^43\)

Kroll’s social and artistic relationship to the Henri circle is most cogently summarized by his closest friend, George Bellows. In Bellows’s lithograph, Four Friends (1921, present locations unknown), Kroll is shown confronting Henri, Bellows, and Speicher with his theories of color, while Henri is depicted in an attitude of puzzlement or skepticism. Lauris Mason pointed out:

Four Friends is an affectionate caricature in which the diminutive Leon Kroll confronts Bellows, Eugene Speicher, and the skeptical Robert Henri, their mentor. Kroll’s strong belief in the pure color used by the French Impressionists was a principle often discussed and argued by Kroll with Henri and his disciples, who favored the opposite theory that suggested that mixing black with color attained the best results.\(^44\)

Certainly however, these men had discussed this issue well before the actual date
of this print, as William Innes Homer has shown that Henri, Speicher, Bellows, and Sloan began experimenting with various color systems as early as 1909.\textsuperscript{45}

During this period Kroll also spent time with the American painter Edward Hopper (1882-1967), "the foremost realist painter of twentieth-century America," according to Gail Levin.\textsuperscript{46} Levin states that "Hopper spent the summer of 1912 in the sea coast town of Gloucester, Massachusetts, painting with Leon Kroll, a contemporary who also lived in Paris."\textsuperscript{47} Paintings that Kroll possibly did at this time include \textit{Good Harbor Beach} (1912, Present collection unknown), \textit{Bridge at Bass Rock} (1912, Present collection unknown), and \textit{Gloucester} (1912, Present collection unknown).\textsuperscript{48} The former two canvases depict wooden bridges and use the broken brushwork of French Impressionism; they are reminiscent of the beach scenes of the French painter Eugène Boudin (1824-1898). \textit{Gloucester} is painted in the broader strokes more typical of the New York paintings Kroll was to do later. Although Kroll's paintings may be derivative, they evince a buoyancy of mood and delight in paint. And though his orientation seems to be French here, Kroll, like Hopper, has been singled out as embodying "an authentic American vision, one that derived from a sense of our national experience and that spoke to a wide audience."\textsuperscript{49} More specific relationships between Hopper and Kroll will be taken up later.

It was apparently at this time, shortly before the Armory show of 1913,
that Kroll met the painter Kathleen McEnery (1885-1971). It appears that the two artists shared a studio in the same building (in the west 50s) in New York. According to Eleanor Tufts, Kroll saw two of McEnery's paintings in her studio while she was recuperating from pleurisy at her sister's home in Montclair, New Jersey. Kroll took it upon himself to enter them in the Armory show, "unbeknownst to McEnery, who was delighted to learn of their acceptance." It was possible that Kroll was attracted to her work due to her early interest in the nude as well as by her bold color. This was one of several instances in which Kroll's actions reflected a concern for the welfare of his fellow artists.

During these years shortly before and after the Armory Show Kroll continued to explore the theme of the urban snow picture which earlier had fascinated the Henri circle. The snow picture as treated by Kroll during these years dealt with other aspects of the city scene and was a theme that continued at least until 1919. In his *West Side Terminal* (1913, Frank Sinatra Collection) and *Terminal Yards* also of 1913 (Fig. 10; Flint Art Institute), he continued the synthesis between the late nineteenth century snow scene as seen, for example, in John Twachtman and the urban snow scenes of Robert Henri (1865-1929) and his circle. Kroll's description of the difficulty of painting outdoors in the winter is quite specific:
I was drawing these trains and ships and buildings of New York which require very careful drawing, especially the tracks, and I couldn’t wear any gloves. I just went with bare hands. I did all these accurate things until it got dark, and I decided to stop painting. I’d been painting for two and a half hours or three hours. As soon as I stopped, and my mind stopped thinking about my pictures, I was so stiff, and there was a terrible pain in my feet, and my whole body was almost frozen. I didn’t realize how the mind can govern the body. However, leaving my picture, my paint box and everything right on the hill without any protection, I was able to crawl up the hill to the road and drag myself into a saloon which was about a block away. After drinking two good strong hookers of whiskey I began to thaw out. Then I went back and picked up my paint box and went home.52

In 1914, Kroll continued his urban snow pictures with Broadway (Looking South) in Snow (Fig. 11; Present collection unknown). This work reveals a relationship to Impressionism in the flattening of space by the use of a “bird’s-eye” perspective, a device often used by the Impressionists specifically in urban scenes. In comparing Camille Pissaro’s Place du Théâtre Française (1895, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) to Kroll’s Broadway (Looking South) in Snow, one can see the same use of the “bird’s-eye” perspective. In the example by Pissaro, the artist dispenses with the horizon line entirely; Kroll, however, maintains a one-point perspective to which all of the buildings recede despite the high vantage point of the viewer. But Kroll’s buildings, even though more weighty than Pissaro’s, do serve the purpose of lifting the eye from the bottom of the canvas to its top. Although Kroll acknowledged his debt to Impressionism in color and, here, in composition, his Broadway (Looking South) in Snow is also indebted to Henri’s thick and aggressive handling of the paint in large shapes.55 During the
years of World War I, Kroll executed several other paintings depicting the urban snow theme.

The critical reaction to Kroll’s early urban scenes has generally been positive. The second review of his work (by Theodore Roosevelt) occurred after the painter Walt Kuhn invited Kroll to exhibit in the Armory Show of 1913. Kroll’s painting Terminal Yards (see no. 43) was purchased by the important American collector and critic Arthur Jerome Eddy, and later Eddy also purchased several other unexhibited canvases by the artist. This was Kroll’s first major critical and financial coup. Theodore Roosevelt’s reaction to the avant-garde works in the Armory Show is well known; however, that Roosevelt singled out Kroll’s Terminal Yards is usually overlooked. He referred to Terminal Yards as “one of the most striking pictures,” one which “one would like to possess; the seeing eye was there, and the cunning hand.” Roosevelt’s attention to Kroll’s work is noteworthy as a harbinger of the artist’s future success in exhibitions.

Milton Brown saw Kroll’s urban scenes as reflecting the “brash aggressiveness and excitement of American Life.” Lorinda Bryant, on the other hand, writing much earlier (1925) than Brown, took a more moralistic view of Kroll’s urban scenes. In her comments on what she called Kroll’s “construction pictures” she wrote: “Mr. Kroll, with strong, vigorous brushstrokes, is giving a solidity and worthwhileness to his construction-pictures that stand for better things in the
world of labor." She continued:

The laborers are not necessarily earthbound, for the placing of every stone and brick and iron girder is a necessary link in the completed building. Their skills alone has made possible the realization of the architect's vision.

Such a glorification of labor reflects a positive view of the works of man manifested by the city held by many intellectuals in the first decades of the century. And the construction of this utopian city is seen clearly in Kroll's Building Manhattan Bridge (Fig. 12; 1919, Serene and Irving Mitchell Felt Coll., N.Y.), in which the artist depicts the actual construction of a building. Amidst the cranes, derricks, conveyor belts and workers, completed skyscrapers can be seen irradiated with a white glowing light.

Eugene Neuhaus, writing about the same time as Bryant, also saw Kroll's early work as glorifying labor. Apropos the painter's Lower Manhattan, in which longshoremen are shown under a bridge mooring a tugboat to the dock, against a backdrop of gleaming skyscrapers, Neuhaus wrote: "Furthermore, the social problem, the fight for existence, brought the working class into the limelight, and there followed emphasis on the proletarian subject in art." Although Kroll never professed an interest in using his art for the expression of overt political ideas, his work has sporadically been seen as reflecting political ideas. This problem will be taken up again in conjunction with Kroll's mural work in the 1930s.

Along with Kroll's growing professional and social involvement with the
American urban realists, another important development occurred around 1910—he painted his first studio nudes. The artist described his transition to the nude in the following manner:

The first pictures that I painted when I came back from Europe in 1910, the early pictures, were all pictures of New York—great big ones, some of them—and I became quite well known for that sort of thing. I remember painting three pictures of Central Park...I had a demand for that kind of picture. They were very popular, besides being liked by artists. I never painted any more of them; I just thought I was beginning to ‘produce’ you know, and I didn’t like that. I began to paint nudes, which nobody wanted, but it was fun painting them.60

Initially, Kroll’s sources are numerous, if not au courant. The composition of Two Nudes (ca. 1910; catalog no. 3), in which one figures holds the hair of the other, appears to draw on precedents earlier established by Jean-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) and somewhat later Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). In both of these artists’ oeuvres there are instances where the figures are shown embracing or touching some part of the other’s body; one such is Ingres’ The Turkish Bath (1862, Louvre), where the central bather with her arms folded is having her hair perfumed by the standing bather on the far right. (The latter holds the former’s hair with one hand and in the other a long-necked vase with a pointed element at its end like an atomizer.) In addition, the heavy buttocks of the figure on the right in the Kroll continue the tradition of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) as well as Courbet. Kroll was again to focus on the heaviness of this part of the female body in back views in such later works as Nude with a Yellow Hat (1933, catalogue no.
25). The composition is necessarily complex because he has arranged two figures. He places one with her back to the viewer while the other faces the viewer in a semi-reclining position. Kroll's Two Nudes also draws on past precedents in its use of still life objects and in particular, fruit. Kroll's still life, in the lower left corner, includes a knife, an object which he continued to incorporate into his work throughout his career.

Another example of Kroll's use of the nude from this early period is Red-Head, Semi-Nude (1911, catalogue No. 4). In this painting, one of several he did of the same model, Kroll presented the young girl in an unidealized manner. She looks at the viewer directly; there is a frankness and directness about this young woman's gaze which is reminiscent of Edouard Manet's (1832-1883) Olympia (1863). Kroll, as in Two Nudes, again includes a still life in the composition but here it is not present literally but is part of another picture which hangs on the wall in the upper right. From a compositional standpoint, Kroll has balanced the curves of the small, round breasts with those of the pieces of fruit in the picture, setting them against the verticals made by the arms and picture frame. In its association of the female form with an inanimate cone, as analogous shapes, this painting might be thought to objectify the woman it portrays—even to commodify her.61 However, the attitude of the model in Red-Head, Semi Nude seems to disallow either commodification or subservience because of her direct gaze and air of optimistic
Despite Kroll's growing artistic involvement with the American scene after 1910, he retained a strong interest in the art and culture of France. He returned to that country in 1911 and stayed until sometime in 1912. During this short interval he painted on small wooden panels a series of landscapes of sites ranging from Brittany to the Mediterranean coast. When he returned to the United States in 1912, Kroll resumed depicting the urban scene and the growing industrial expansion around him, as we have seen.

The year 1914 again saw the artist depart for Europe a third time, but now he went to Spain, where he became enamored of the Spanish landscape. Characteristic examples of his work at this time were Basque Landscape, (Fig. 13; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts) and The Bull Ring (Fig. 14; 1914, present location unknown). In referring to the work of this period, one critic observed several years later: "He has painted his best landscapes in Spain, [a country] which seems to suit Kroll's personality better than America; his treatment of trees is one of the most striking characteristics of his compositions, in which he seems to carry on what Cézanne, [Vincent] Van Gogh [1853-1890], and Eugene Laermans began." The Bull Ring appears to show an especially strong relationship to Van Gogh, due to the agitated strokes in the foreground and the treatment of the rolling hills in the middle-distance. The Basque Landscape includes a single cypress standing
sentinel-like against the sky, a feature also reminiscent of Van Gogh. Indeed, Kroll was fond of the Dutch painter: “I loved Cézanne’s work and was fascinated by him and Van Gogh and a little later [Paul] Gauguin [1848-1903]. In fact I discovered both Van Gogh and Cézanne without ever hearing their names, just through loving their pictures.” While in Spain he visited the Prado, which he believed was the greatest museum in the world. “I don’t know anything like it for quality of painting.” He mentioned Francisco Zurbarán (1598-1664) and Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665) as being his favorites in the Prado.

Upon his return to the United States in 1914, Kroll continued with another aspect of his work—portrait painting. Two of his portraits of 1914 are especially notable, due in part to their subjects. Although there is no documentation for any earlier relationship between one sitter, Manuel Komroff, and Kroll, the two men probably met through Henri and/or Bellows, since Henri, Bellows, and Komroff were all associated with the Ferrar Center. This was a radical educational institution which espoused, among other things, a philosophical anarchism. Bellows and Henri taught there, according to Donald Drew Egbert, because it was the nature of their art to oppose academic traditions, and this drew them into the “radicalized” orbit. Egbert does not say whether Komroff was a student or taught at the Ferrar Center but, like Bellows, he was a Socialist.

The portrait of Manuel Komroff (Fig. 15; 1914, Portland Me., Museum)
is characterized by bold brushstrokes which are clearly seen in the paint surface, especially in the patterned drape in the right background and on the suit jacket under the coat. The color of the jacket contains browns, gold, gray, and red hues which contrast with the red and blue-green tones of the tie and drapery respectively. This portrait shows the use of ancillary elements which give an additional complexity to the content and at the same time contribute to the compositional structure. For example, the portfolio of musical scores held by the subject is balanced formally and reinforced thematically by the painting hung on the wall to the left: Komroff studied painting and engineering in addition to being a composer. Kroll’s own family background had been similar, for it will be recalled that his father too loved music and mathematics, and it is quite possible that these shared interests attracted Kroll to Komroff rather than political affinities.

Another portrait which Kroll painted in 1914 was that of the sculptor Robert Laurent (1890-1970). The portrait of Robert Laurent (present location unknown) was most likely payment for a frame that Laurent made for Kroll, for their art had very little in common at this time. It was much later, in the late 1920s, that Laurent was to turn to the female nude as a subject, perhaps influenced by Kroll. If the portrait of Manuel Komroff can be related to the Henri circle in brushwork, then the portrait of Robert Laurent can be seen as perhaps the artist’s first attempt to assimilate the ideas of Cézanne. Kroll’s understanding of Cézanne
at this time was indicated by the following statement:

The Laurent portrait..., has the open kind of planes of a Cézanne, rather than the solid continuity of a Rembrandt idea, of running one plane into another and making a sort of luminous whole of the thing, and making the three-dimensional sensation through chiaroscuro rather than through color planes. This thing is full of brilliant color planes. Quite a different idea of building a head in three dimensions. The Cézanne idea was color planes, rather than the black and white transition business. 73

Kroll's portrait, however, does not appear to let the "chiaroscuro" approach go completely, especially in the treatment of the head (in contrast to the jacket where the planes are much more abrupt).

Kroll also spent at least part of the summers of 1913 or 1914 with George and Emma Bellows on Monhegan Island, off the Maine coast, where he painted Monhegan Island, (c. 1913, H. V. Allison Galleries, N.Y.). 74 Kroll, like Bellows and Homer before him, was fascinated by every aspect of the rocky Maine coast. 75

Kroll spent much time painting with Henri and Bellows during the years 1913-16; however the literature is somewhat ambiguous about the exact dates and places. Donald Braider, for example, states that Bellows spent the summer of 1914 at Monhegan. 76 According to Lauris Mason it was the summers of 1913-14. 77 She did not mention Ogunquit, Maine until 1915-16. It was there that he painted Boats on the Harbor (Fig. 16; 1915, Jean and Samuel Saprin Coll., Sherman Oaks, CA). Kroll himself mentioned that he was painting alone at Eddyville, New York, in 1916 when he heard from Henri:
I was up in Eddyville for the first time, in 1916, painting all by myself when I got a very urgent letter from Robert Henri telling me that George Bellows was at Camden, Maine. Henri said, 'Why don’t you go up there and paint near George? He’d like you to, very much. He wrote to me that he’s very lonely and in a rut.' I thought that would be all right, so I took my little car and drove to Maine, and I settled at Camden in a little house right next to the Bellows family. I gave Bellows some criticism every day. He was in a rut, and he loved the criticism. We had a wonderful time together.\footnote{78}

Kroll was very productive at Camden, producing Building the Ship, Round-out; Camden, (present locations unknown), and Camden, Maine (Fig. 17; Leon Kroll Estate). The most important work he completed at Camden is his well known \textit{In the Country} (Fig. 18; 1916, Detroit Institute of Arts).\footnote{79}

\textit{In the Country} is of unique importance within Kroll’s \textit{oeuvre} not only because it depicted the Bellows family and was his first major arcadian work since the student work done in Paris (which he destroyed), but also because it differed from the more mythological arcadies of such contemporaries as Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928), Maurice Prendergast (1859-1924), Bryson Burroughs, Edward Manigault (1887-1922), Arthur Crisp (1881-?), and Elliot Daingerfield (1849-1932). Their arcadies reach back to the late nineteenth-century work of Puvis.\footnote{80} Kroll’s \textit{In the Country} relates more to what I see as a modern notion—urban people placed in a rural setting. Kroll’s "idyll" thus can be related to the work in this genre done by Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), such as \textit{Arcadia} (1883, New York, Metropolitan Museum), where the figures are the family of the artist rather than imaginary beings. But even in Eakins’s quasi-realistic arcadia, the artist presented the figures
holding objects suggesting Roman mythology (the Pan pipes) within a “dreamlike yearning for the past” which is the painting’s essential mood, according to William Gerdts.  

If Kroll’s In the Country differs from contemporary arcadias, it nevertheless imbues the forms with a classical immobility, thus suggesting suspended animation and timelessness. In the painting, Kroll shows Emma Bellows leaning against a tree staring out at the viewer; to her left, her daughter Jean (named after Eugene Speicher) crawls to her on her hands and knees, while in the background Bellows’s mother reads quietly from a book, as the artist looks up while pushing his older daughter Anne in a swing. But as Loring Dodd stated, this gesture of Bellows is in suspension, as are all of the figures who appear as if they will never again move.  

Dodd believed that the canvas was like the “fairy tale of our childhood. The castle is enchanted. It awaits the princely awakener.” In The Country was to be followed by several other arcadias in the next few years, including Poetry Reading, Maine (1918, Leon Kroll Estate), Garden Scene with Figures (1919, Present location unknown), and Picnic, Barrington, (1919, Present location unknown).  

The response of Bellows to In the Country was quite enthusiastic, according to Kroll: “Bellows was quite pleased. He said this composition was remarkable, and later, in 1920, he painted a picture of Gramercy Park using this same kind of composition. But of course it’s a Bellows, just the same.” Kroll’s painting
In the Country of 1916 influenced Bellows’ picture Gramercy Park of 1920 (Fig. 19; Private collection). Although Kroll painted his first urban park scenes in the 1920s, the subject was very popular within the Henri circle before 1910, especially in the work of Sloan and Bellows. In Bellows’ Gramercy Park, a large central tree with the figure standing in front and a secondary group or figure immediately adjacent recalls a similar format in Kroll’s painting. Likewise, the inclusion of a seated group in the left middle distance is shared. To the far right of his composition, Bellows places another seated figure on a park bench. It seems that what Kroll ultimately meant by saying “...it’s a Bellows, just the same” was that the paint is put down more spontaneously, and things seem to blend together in a more atmospheric sense. The shapes and forms in Kroll’s work were better defined and linear. This is especially apparent in the treatment of the negative spaces within the trees. These shapes take on a more definite contour than in the Bellows.

Although Kroll had been very productive in Camden, he left after the summer and returned to New York. He continued to see a great deal of Henri and Bellows, as well as Randall Davey and Eugene Speicher. Kroll has recorded some of his observations of these meetings:

After I left Camden and came back to New York, we had one of our regular sessions with Henri and Bellows and Speicher and Randall Davey and discussed each other’s work. These evenings we used to have were delightful. We’d have dinner and sit around and look at the summer’s work of one of the painters and discuss them and criticize them.85

About the same time Kroll acknowledged Cézanne’s influence. “For the
years 1915-18 I thought Cézanne was a very interesting influence in my work," the artist wrote. Since Kroll had discovered Cézanne as a student and had ample opportunity to see his work at the Armory Show, the lateness of this influence can be partially explained as an attempt to come to terms with modernism after its earlier manifestations in terms of Impressionism had become more understood by Kroll. It is in a group of landscapes done in 1917 that the influence of Cézanne can most strongly be seen. Three examples in particular stand out in this respect. The first, painted near Woodstock, is *Landscape-Two Rivers* (1917, Baltimore Museum). In this painting, the river coming into the picture from the lower right seems to run up the painting on the vertical axis as well as on the diagonal axis because of the lack of a vanishing point and the high horizon. The foreground area, comprising natural forms with geometric houses, suggests a relationship to Cézanne’s *Gulf of Marseilles Seen from L’Estaque*, (1883-85, New York, Metropolitan Museum). Also, the way Kroll uses the river to emphasize frontality while at the same time indicating depth is typical of Cézanne; this method can be seen, for instance, in *Basket with Apples, Bottle, Biscuits, and Fruit*, (1890, Art Institute of Chicago) where the white tablecloth, like the river, leads the eye back into space and upwards into the bottle simultaneously.

In the summer of 1917, Kroll traveled to Taos, New Mexico, where Henri, Bellows, and Davey were already at work. En route to Taos he stopped in Col-
orado where he had received some portrait commissions. While there he painted two more landscapes which continued to reflect the strong influence of Cézanne—The Lake in the Mountains (Fig. 20; 1917, Flint Institute), and Cheyenne Mountain (Fig. 21; 1917, Kroll Estate). In the latter, the motif of the large mountain with its forms broken up into small facets recalls certain of Cézanne’s late depictions of Mont Sainte-Victoire, in which the faceted mountain ridge runs continuously from border to border very dramatically and is not centered in the composition. Coloristically, Kroll has played a strong yellow in the foreground against the cool blues and greens of the distance, in keeping with Cézanne’s use of color planes to suggest space. However, the more detailed treatment of foliage seen in the single large pine tree in the right foreground and the sharper delineation of the forms comprising the mountain are characteristic of Kroll. It is Kroll’s own sense of color and emphasis on the concreteness of the subject which makes his Cheyenne Mountain unique. Unlike Cézanne’s foregrounds, Kroll’s foreground carries the eye via the diagonal to the middle ground and then to the background. There is no spatial ambiguity between the facets as in Cézanne, where the middle ground seems to float towards the viewer because of hue, value, and unresolved planes.

The year 1918 is noteworthy in Kroll’s development because it is then that he appears to have painted his first outdoor nudes. Kroll’s Nude Back of 1918 (present location unknown) is perhaps his best nude from this time in my view
because of the simple forms. The composition in this painting forms a strong "X" configuration consisting of the cliffs on the left and the nude's body sloping to the right. Kroll succeeded in giving this figure the force and power of the cliffs, in part by painting the body as simply and geometrically as the inert forms in the cliffs. Here Kroll continues the nineteenth century tradition of placing female figures in juxtaposition with rocks, sky and/or sea. These motifs can be seen in the work of Homer certainly, but, more important, they are also treated by Charles C. Curran, Kroll's instructor at the National Academy at the same time. In Curran's Noonday Sunlight (Fig. 22; 1918, Richmond, Indiana Art Museum), three young women stand or sit on a rocky ledge framed against the cloud filled sky. The standing central figure stands with her hands at her waist in a somewhat heroic attitude, even though these young ladies are just enjoying the fine weather rather than struggling against nature. They are in a triangular arrangement and reflect a related sense of geometric organization, as does Kroll's Nude Back. Curran's figures, in their good looks, can be related to Kroll also. But, like Homer, Curran was not known to have painted nudes in nature.

In 1920, Kroll rented a house in Woodstock, New York where Henri, Bellows, Speicher (1883-1962), and John Carroll (1892-1959) were already painting. He had been going there intermittently since 1906, the year he and Arthur B. Car­les each won a summer scholarship from the National Academy. Kroll seems never
to have been completely comfortable socially at Woodstock. At first, when Woodstock was what he referred to as a “young” colony, he felt “ostracized” socially by the “natives” whom he called “one hundred and fifty percent Americans.” Then later, in 1921, when Peggy Bacon and her husband Alexander Brook (1898-1980) became residents, their presence seemingly compounded the problems. Roberta K. Tarbell in her catalogue on Bacon mentioned the following:

There were two stimulating places to eat in Woodstock: the Maverick, where Alexander often ate, and the lunchroom run by the anarchist Hippolyte Havel, which was frequented by the Cramers, Harvey White, Mattson, and those artists Peggy dubbed the academy—Bellows, Henri, Kroll, and Speicher, and their wives—whom she found “unWoodstockian.”

Tarbell further noted that this “academy” was new to Woodstock in 1921 and it was with the artistically “radical” group that Bacon and Brook identified. Perhaps because he sensed that either he or his work was not appreciated in that environment, Kroll never returned to Woodstock after 1924.

Kroll continued his earlier interest in idyllic scenes in the 1920s in A Day in August (Fig. 23; 1920, Private collection) and in a group of park scenes he painted in 1922. These are The Park-Winter (Fig. 24; Cleveland Museum of Art), Sleep (Fig. 25; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.), and Central Park (Fig. 26; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.). These are different subjects for Kroll; his figures during the teens are generally involved with physical labor as in his earliest snow pictures. Here the concern is
with an athletic leisure activity. In the first example, Kroll manifests his love of life and, simultaneously, suggests an urban winter idyll, by depicting a group of city dwellers enjoying nature within the city. The diminutive figures could be lost against the wide expanses of snow, trees, and towering buildings of the New York skyline but the colors of their clothing make them stand out from the gray tones throughout. In relegating the figure to a secondary role, Kroll continues his earlier habit of focusing chiefly on architecture. Here, however, the buildings are not the grimy warehouses, factories, and tenements found in the earlier urban scenes, but the citadels of commerce of upper Manhattan. No smokestacks or water tanks are in evidence in the architecture of his park scenes. William M. Milliken has called attention to the stylistic and thematic influence on The Park-Winter of both Cézanne and Flemish sixteenth century painting. In the case of the latter, he was probably thinking of Pieter Breughel the Elder’s (c. 1525-1569) Hunters in the Snow (1565, Art History Museum, Vienna), with its bird’s eye view of the figures contrasting with the snow. Milliken pointed out that “throughout, the artist’s primary concern is structure, the structure of the earth beneath its snowy covering, the sense of tree structure, the emphasis always on form and volume. Although the work could not have been painted without Cézanne’s influence, the canvas is essentially Kroll’s.”

Kroll’s next major park painting Sleep, Central Park shows that, by 1922, Kroll has moved away from the formalistic concerns of his Cézanne period of 1915-
1920, and his earlier realism manifested by the urban scenes of 1910-14. In contrast to the Portrait of Robert Laurent, in which Kroll's concern was the use of brilliant color planes rather than chiaroscuro to build a sense of continuous form, Sleep, Central Park uses subtle effects of chiaroscuro to build an experience of three dimensional form and space and, ultimately, mystery. This is seen, for example, in the very gradual modeling of light to dark on the standing figure at the left. The light strikes her from the left, falling on her chest and breasts and giving her dress the kind of diaphanous quality one can see in analogous passages in works by certain early Renaissance artists such as Fra Filippo Lippi (1406-1469). Her left arm, moving forward, catches the light on its outer edge. The face of this young woman has an ethereal quality reminiscent of another Renaissance artist, Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510), and seen again in the Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne Jones (1833-1898) (e.g., in King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, 1884, Tate Gallery, London), although there is no written evidence to suggest that Kroll was influenced by these artists directly. In the foreground group, Kroll reserved his greatest value contrast between the two sleeping figures, one in white, the other in black. And then as one moves into the deep space of the picture, the values tend to draw together. This is a traditional device, used for example in Breughel's Hunters in the Snow. Except for the two foreground figures, the light and darks are close in value, giving the picture its "hazy" or poetic mood of reverie.
Kroll here seems to be turning inward and is concentrating on more romantic ideas. However, to use the term "surreal" in describing the mood of *Sleep*, as one recent writer did, is misleading. Despite the atmospheric haziness within *Sleep*, there are no formal dislocations to warrant the use of this term. Kroll's forms are all logically related and continuous, and do not disregard the laws of time and space. Other artists who also reveal a concern for a subjective, and in some cases even religious, subject matter at this time are Arthur Crisp (1881-1967?), Edward Manigault (1887-1922), Arthur B. Davies, Maurice Prendergast (1859-1924), and Bernard Karfiol, who had "a consciously artless style suggestive of innocence," according to Patricia Hills. She saw these artists as being related because of their subjective approach to subject matter. Although Kroll did not know all of these painters, influences from this development began to filter into his art by 1920.

In 1923 Kroll revisited Europe a fourth time and painted in various areas of France. He spent time on the northern coast, where he painted the delightful view of Honfleur (Fig. 27; Leon Kroll Estate). The large, simple shapes combined with the rich color makes this one of Kroll's most successful urban scenes. The blue sky in contrast with the pinkish pavement and the little spots of bright color in the tiny figures are especially pleasing. The bird's-eye perspective is reminiscent of *The Park-Winter* of 1922 and the much earlier *Terminal Yards* of 1913, although both of these paintings have a thicker application of paint.
One day while in Paris, Kroll's "great friend," Leo Stein, took the artist to the home of Robert (1885-1941) and Sonia Delaunay (1885- ). Kroll later recalled his relationship to the Delaunays:

Then I met Sonia Delaunay. Robert Delaunay was a very good French painter and he was a friend of the Fauves. I don't know why he took to me, but we became very intimate friends Delaunay and I, although my work was entirely different. We had a respect for each other. I made a drawing of him, and he gave me 2 or 3 of his paintings. I liked to go to their house.

Although Kroll's relationship to the Delaunays did not visibly affect his work, it was of significance for his personal life, as it was at their house that he met his future wife, Genevieve Domec, who was to be known thereafter as "Viette." After a short engagement of six weeks, the couple was married in October, 1923. For their honeymoon, they went to Cassis in the south of France, where the artist continued painting.

His visit resulted in an especially Poussinesque composition entitled Cassis (Fig. 28; Present collection unknown). The painting is dominated by large, simple geometric forms, using the loose brush-work within a severe edge seen in Honfleur. On the right stands a large cylindrical tower with a rectangular building beneath it. The latter is a literal cube without any windows or decoration. The rest of the composition is also characterized by large simple forms. Kroll, as previously mentioned, expressed admiration for the work of Poussin, an artist he apparently discovered during his visit to the Prado in 1914. In particular, Poussin's
Matthew and The Angel (ca. 1640-45, Berlin-Dahlem Museum) appears to be similar to Cassis in form and composition. In the Poussin, the diminutive figures are placed in the foreground between architectural ruins consisting of unembellished cubes, rectangles and cylinders which are as large as the figures. Likewise, in the Kroll, a tiny and solitary figure is seen trudging up the steep road with the massive architectural forms of the city surrounding the old woman. Kroll also uses a full panoply of geometric forms including rectangles, cubes, pyramids and cylinders in the manner of Poussin. But unlike the latter, Kroll maintains a strict frontality of space in his relief-like composition and does not allow the eye to escape into the distance. Cassis ultimately reflects Kroll’s ingrained conservatism of style, but it is not without some oblique references to modernist brushwork. Although Kroll was in Germany during his student years, it is not known whether he saw the Matthew and The Angel or possibly a reproduction of it. While in the south of France, Kroll traveled to Italy, which made a lasting impression on him; he was to return there two more times. Later that year, the couple returned to the United States.

The next year, 1924, was to be one of Kroll’s most successful professionally, as it was at this time he painted Young Women (Fig. 29; Iowa State Education Association, Des Moines, Iowa). The system of Jay Hambidge (1867-1924), which Kroll learned by 1918, is first mentioned by the artist in 1925. It was sometime
before 1918 that Kroll had become acquainted with the artist Howard Giles (1876-1955). Although it is not certain when he met Giles, Kroll was already associated with him prior to November of that year because he reported that Giles had taken him to hear a lecture by Jay Hambidge sometime before that date and that he later introduced Bellows and Henri to Hambidge. The art of Giles was essentially conservative in style and it consisted of desolate landscapes containing wild horses with romantic titles such as Dawn and Arcadia. Both men shared an enthusiasm for the lectures of Hambidge. Hambidge propounded the idea that all past great works had an underlying geometric basis which can also be seen in nature and that if one could understand the rules governing that geometry, one could find a means of creating works on a purely scientific basis. The form in nature that seemed most fruitful for analysis was the spiral. The latter was based on a logarithmic spiral in which the law of proportion was found. This was interpreted through specific right angle relationships which Hambidge called Dynamic Symmetry.

Although Kroll was not immediately influenced by Dynamic Symmetry, it was the basis for some of his later group compositions of the 1920s, such as the very well received Young Women of 1924. Since it is virtually impossible to tell just by looking whether a painting is based on Dynamic Symmetry, or whether the artist has arrived at similar compositional decisions intuitively, it cannot be said with certainty to what degree Kroll had used Hambridge's system previously.
However, Kroll did comment in detail about the use of Dynamic Symmetry in Young Women. According to Kroll, the “scheme [is] very simple. Two overlapping squares and the square of the diagonal of the whole, subdividing into squares of 1.309 resulting in shapes directly related to the whole.” This explanation by Kroll is very ambiguous and in fact is not very “simple.” Without the superimposed lines Kroll made over a photo of the picture enclosed with the letter, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to see any direct connection to Dynamic Symmetry. In this picture three young women are seen in a low-ceilinged room gathered around a table on which a still life is centrally placed. The woman on the left (Viette) looks to the right and rests her weight by placing one leg over the edge of the table. The center woman looks straight ahead and stands, while the third woman at the far right is seated and rests her arms on the table next to the still life.

Kroll felt that Young Women was his “best picture so far.” That the painting made a deep impression on those who saw it in 1924 is witnessed not only by Bellows’s observation that it reminded him of “Greek Sculpture,” but also by the several important prizes it received when exhibited. In a letter to Weeks, Kroll wrote:

I would like to exhibit it through this season for it is doing my reputation a lot of good and is becoming one of the best known of American pictures. I hear about it quite often through newspapers and reproductions in the press. All comment is highly favorable.

Although quite well received in Kroll’s lifetime, it has since become virtually a
forgotten American painting, rather than "one of the best known."

For a painting that was deemed so important by Kroll, it is strange that he would not have more to say. But in his Memoirs, he is concerned primarily with problems attendant to its sale. The only thing he mentioned other than Dynamic Symmetry was his desire to choose "types of young women to contrast sufficiently without their doing so obviously." Again, this statement is far from clear, as the young women do not contrast in any noticeable way. They are all from the same socio-economic class (upper middle) and represent the same age and degree of attractiveness. In terms of facial expressions, they are essentially identical; they neither smile, talk, nor reflect emotion. About the only thing that seems to be varied are the dresses they wear. In terms of the artist's stated intentions in this sector, the painting falls short of his goals.

Because of Kroll's growing reputation, and Young Women's success, he was offered a visiting professorship at the Art Institute of Chicago for the 1924-25 school year. While at the Art Institute, Kroll became embroiled in a controversy with the Dean of the school over teaching methods. Apparently Kroll felt a need to operate on a liberal basis, without issuing grades. This episode did not prevent him from completing his tenure at the school but it did sour him on teaching, even though he felt he was rather successful while in Chicago.

During his residency at the Art Institute, Kroll and Bellows were the
subjects of a two-man exhibition in that museum. While this exhibition was in progress, the Krolls learned of the sudden death of Bellows on January 8, 1925. Although Kroll did not return to New York to serve as a pallbearer, he did give a eulogy for Bellows in an address he delivered to the Chicago art public in connection with their show. He also eulogized his friend in another speech given on the occasion of the opening of a one-man exhibition of his work in Des Moines, Iowa, immediately following the closing of the Chicago exhibition.  

Sometime after the Chicago show opened, Kroll painted *Nude Dorothy*, (ca. 1924-25, catalogue no. 15). Although Kroll offered contradictory information about where and when he painted this picture, it was probably painted in the United States. It is an important work for several reasons: first, it continued his earlier treatment of the nude while showing more of the studio environment; second, it initiates a major change in the feminine type he portrays, as I point out later; and third, although Kroll saw the model as having a "spiritual head," the painting also has a strong connection to the popular arts, particularly fashion advertising.

According to Milton Brown, the origin of the studio picture in American painting can be traced to the nineteenth century. Although Brown does not associate it with a specific painter in American art, another writer, Robert Hobbs, related studio painting to the work of William M. Chase (1849-1916). Although
Chase painted bright Impressionistic landscapes, he was also concerned with the life inside the artist’s domain, as seen for example In the Studio (Brooklyn Museum). Oliver Larkin wrote about Chase that “he moved within a narrowing mental circle, more concerned with the life of the artist than with the serious aspects of the life around him.” Brown also saw the studio picture as one reflection “of the artist’s increasing isolation from normal social relationships,” citing in this connection Jules Pascin (1885-1930), Bernard Karfiol, Alexander Brook, Emil Ganso (1895-1941), and Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1893-1953), but not Chase or Kroll.

The painter of studio subjects that Kroll was most closely associated with over a long period of time was Eugene Speicher. Speicher, like Kroll, was well known for his paintings of the nude in the 1920s. A comparison of Kroll’s Nude Dorothy of 1925 with Speicher’s Torso of Hilda (1928, Detroit Institute of Arts) shows some differences. The main one is that Torso of Hilda is a more “particular” individual than the generalized type that is seen in Nude Dorothy. Kroll’s figure has a glamorous look similar to a fashion model, while Speicher’s figure is more earthy and warm in appearance. Technically, Speicher’s figure is also different. The drapery in Speicher is painted very directly with large areas of white contrasting with the broadly brushed shadows. There is no glazing, but rather a scumbled quality to the drapery surfaces. The painting of the flesh of the torso is very evenly modeled from dark to light in contrast to the rather brusque treatment of the drapery folds.
And the torso indicates areas where one color has been glazed over another. The background and the area in the lower left under Hilda’s arm is, like the drapery, painted freely with large shapes of contrasting patterns. Kroll’s figure is generally more linear, without the even modeling of Hilda from dark to light on the breasts and stomach; thus Dorothy does not appear to be as three dimensional and weighty. She is essentially painted in a few light values. The drapery is also more linear in the Kroll than in the Speicher, and the Kroll painting is painted directly throughout, without any glazing, even in the figure.

Speicher’s continued popularity amongst the critics in the 1930s was due to his portrayal of the female nude. The art critic for the New York American observed:

It is in his revitalized conception of the female figure that he may lay claim to immortality. The elusive young women he places on the canvas are elevated and impersonal. They scarcely personify human types, but are the embodiments of states of mind. In brief, they inhabit planes of thought and speak to us of a world governed by formal order.119

The well-known critic Henry McBride saw Speicher’s figures as untroubling, calm and conservative, exuding a quality of health without puzzles.120 These are qualities both Kroll and Speicher share at this time. Nevertheless, Kroll always felt himself to be quite different from Speicher because of their origins in the National Academy of Design and the more liberal Art Student’s League respectively. This early training may account for Speicher’s more “particularized” approach to the female nude in Torso of Hilda compared to the more linear and two-dimensional
quality of *Nude Dorothy*.

Kroll's *Nude Dorothy* is not only significant for its connection to the genre of the studio picture in the 1920s, but also because of its reference to the popular arts, particularly advertising art and the cinema. This relationship was initially pointed out by Walter Gutman in an article in 1930 but has not been explored any further since that time. To do so now seems particularly relevant given what we now recognize as the importance of popular culture for the fine arts tradition in American art generally.

I would like to suggest several ideas. First, a relationship to advertising can be seen in several paintings over a twenty-five year span. Second, this relationship can be seen in reference to not only "fashion magazines," but also advertisements of various commercial products, calendar art (pinups), and that genre of popular culture known as the "girlie" magazines. If there can be said to be any sequence to these connections it appears that in the 1920s his work was related to fashion magazines such as *Vogue* or *Vanity Fair*; in the 1930s evidence will be cited to show relationships to advertisements of commercial products, while in the 1940s the relationship is most closely linked with the World War II craze for the pinup, and to a lesser extent the girlie magazine. Whether the ideas and motifs in question (and Kroll's treatment of them) are ultimately traceable to art history or commercial art is very difficult to say in all instances. Thus I am only interested in showing...
that both Kroll and some artists within the mass media who also depicted the female form can be related to each other stylistically and thematically.

One other issue raised by Kroll's connection to the commercial arts of his time, and in particular the pinup, is the fact that several recent writers have interpreted the pinup as being demeaning to women. They have seen this art form as a modern manifestation of the paternalistic attitude, according to which men were expected to control their wives, for purposes of sexual and/or economic exploitation. Thus, the pinup became a way of vicariously objectifying and then controlling the female body for purposes of sexual exploitation. Depending on the extent to which Kroll's nudes can in fact be related to the genre of the pinup, this raises other questions about his uses of the nude. Since these last issues are associated with his work of the 1940s, they will be addressed more fully later.

During the 1920s, the particular magazine which in my view most strongly parallels Kroll's style as seen in Nude Dorothy, for example, is Vogue. The French Art Deco graphic designer and artist Georges Lepape (1887-1971), who came to the United States for five months in 1926 did a series of covers for Vogue which strikingly recreated the Kroll type as seen in Nude Dorothy. Lepape had been well known in avant-garde circles in France from the earliest years of the century. When he arrived in the United States in 1926, he established himself as an important French designer who had earlier made sets for the Ballets Russes, had worked...
for the famous couturier Paul Poiret, and had created covers for Vogue's English magazine early in the 1920s. He became associated with entertainment celebrities shortly after his arrival. Claude Lepape and Thierry Defert wrote "he [George Lepape] spoke of meetings with Gershwin, the darling of the New York avant-garde, who, along with Louis Armstrong, set people's feet tapping in Central Park—and with Charlie Chaplin, then struggling to finish editing The Circus."  

A typical cover by Lepape, seen in a collection of his original designs for Vogue (Fig. 30; 1926, Alain Lesieutre Collection), shows a single figure dominating the page and striding to the left. Kroll's Nude Dorothy likewise dominates her painting and strides to the left. In both figures, the right arm extends downward, creating a block of negative space between the body and the arm. In the Kroll, this arm holds the drapery covering the genital area; in Lepape, the arm is simply resting on the hips. The left hand of the Lepape figure holds a purse which creates a diagonal line forming a visual connection to the right side of the composition. In the Kroll, the drapery, also on the diagonal, serves a similar function and is wrapped around the left hand. Finally, both figures are essentially flat and decorative. Dark hair or a hat frames the face of each woman which is characterized by small puckered bow-shaped lips, pointed nose, and a chin that is set back from the mouth. There is also a flat, decorative form used by the two artists.

Both Lepape and Kroll may have relied on Ingres's work, especially in the
master's flat, decorative style, as well as the facial type to which he was partial. The influence of Ingres both among the European avant-garde and with American artists and collectors was quite strong during the 1920s. Morton D. Zabel in an article from early 1930 pointed out Ingres’s relation to Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) as well as his prestige among collectors. He mentioned, for example, that one of Ingres’s “major achievements,” the portrait of Mme. d’Haussonville, came into the Frick Collection in early 1927, shortly becoming the most famous Ingres in America. Beginning in 1927 also Kroll’s admiration of Ingres became known.

To compare Lepape and Kroll does not establish a direct link between the two, but rather initiates thoughts on the similarity of taste common to different arts in the mid-1920s. It is most probably not a question of Kroll’s being influenced specifically by Lepape or vice versa, but rather of a common attitude which in large part can be related to the renewed interest in Ingres at this time in France and the United States.

This common attitude was also linked to what has been referred to as Art Deco, a movement which lasted about thirty years (1908-1939). Although Kroll’s and Lepape’s work does not share all of the defining characteristics of this style, they do have a few things in common with Art Deco. One of these is the fascination with and use of machine forms, especially after 1925. In Lepape’s 1926 Vogue cover, for example, he included an automobile in the background facing right to
counteract the striding motion of the figure to the left. The lines of the automobile, like those of the figure are simple and geometric. Although Kroll does not include anything mechanical in *Nude Dorothy*, he does position a very austere massive arch over the figure, which gives the effect of an opening into a giant dynamo. Another Art Deco trait Lepape and Kroll manifest is what can be called “Egyptian influence.” This influence was particularly strong after Howard Carter’s discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb in 1922 and it is seen in *Nude Dorothy* and Lepape’s cover in the general profile heads, front view torsos, and profile legs of the respective figures. Finally, in regard to fashion, Art Deco exuded an attitude of elegance, refinement, sophistication, and optimism. In this respect Kroll’s work can be related to the optimistic tenor of the era rather than to its pessimistic aspect. The sense of refinement and elegance is to be found in Kroll also.

Kroll’s major accomplishment in Europe during the summer of 1925 was the completion of a very large canvas begun in Chicago entitled *My Wife’s Family* (Fig. 31; University of Virginia, Charlottesville). The critic Robert Pincus-Witten believed that this painting is “one of the elect figure pieces of American painting—on a par with Edwin Dickinson’s *An Anniversary* of 1921 . . . .” He found the study of the artist’s mother-in-law “breathtaking, as is the firm and uncompromising drawing of his father-in-law; and these superbly rendered figures are counterpoised by the elegantly painted male drinkers of the left-hand middle
ground.” It comes much closer to achieving the artist’s stated goals with respect to his earlier Young Women of 1924. However, My Wife’s Family never achieved as much critical acclaim as the former. A group portrait, this picture shows much stronger feeling for the individuals within it than the earlier work, especially in the likenesses of Viette’s parents, brothers, and sister whom Kroll captured in a straightforward manner without any of the repetitiousness and schematicism of Young Women.

The composition is based on a large central triangle, partially open on the right and anchored on the bottom by the sweeping figure of Viette’s sister which connects both sides of the composition. The use of large trees in conjunction with each of the main figure groups, the brothers to the left, the mother and Viette in the center, and the father to the right, is reminiscent of certain works as far back as the Renaissance but more recently seen in Manet’s Luncheon on the Grass (1863, Louvre). The color in My Wife’s Family is very rich and jewel-like in quality. The yellow ochre cushion under the feet of Viette’s sister has a glowing quality as does the burnt sienna of the middle distance. These hues in turn contrast with the low key blues, blue-greens, black-greens of the lake and trees in the distance. In works where he knew his subjects well, such as My Wife’s Family and the earlier In the Country (1917) depicting the Bellows family, Kroll seems to be able to respond to his subjects as individuals rather than as “types” and thus to manifest
his inherent realism and humanism.

Kroll's *My Wife's Family* recalls Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881, Phillips Coll., Washington, D.C.) in subject. Both works contain a table around which people have gathered to eat, drink and talk. In addition, both artists have a dog on the left; in the Kroll, the foreground figure appears to pet it while in the Renoir the young woman is playing with it on the table. Also, both paintings have a standing figure which looks to the right creating a line of vision which completes the composition. Finally, in both cases the backgrounds are quite similar in that they are separated from the foregrounds by a railing in Renoir and a low wall in Kroll. Beyond these appear a river on which sailing boats are seen in Renoir, while Kroll has one small rowboat. The latter seems to correspond to a rowboat on the extreme left in the Renoir. Aside from these similarities there are also very significant differences. Kroll's composition is much more architectonic, based as it is on a triangle. Renoir's composition is much more informal and accidental in appearance giving his painting a more spontaneous feeling. Renoir's figures do not have the quality of being "models" or posing, whereas Kroll's figures are too perfectly placed for them to reflect the spontaneity of life. Renoir's brushwork and color also contribute to the sense of the momentary while Kroll's forms are more substantial, especially in the background.

After completing *My Wife's Family* in the summer on the Seine, at Samoir,
the Krolls left for the south of France and spent the next several months at St. Jean, Cap Ferrat near the Riviera. During this period Kroll was working outdoors primarily. In a letter to Carl Weeks, he expressed the desire to return to the north and get a studio in Paris so he could work indoors once again.\textsuperscript{136} In another letter dated 31st March [1926], he wrote: “As for me I am working steadily and producing—will have about eight or ten new pictures to show for my winter’s work.”\textsuperscript{137} In the same letter he mentioned that he “finished a good nude.”\textsuperscript{138} Most likely he was referring to \textit{Nita, Nude} (catalogue no. 16), since this is the only major nude from this period. The painting is another example of a Kroll studio nude, but unlike \textit{Dorothy Nude} from the previous year, there is nothing to suggest a connection to Art Deco or advertising art. It is more like \textit{Portrait of My Wife’s Family} in Kroll’s concern for the individualized forms of the young girl’s body and face rather than the more schematized treatment characteristic of \textit{Nude Dorothy}.

In a letter dated April 19, 1926, Kroll wrote: “May run in to Italy for a couple of weeks before going north. Florence is so close I can’t resist seeing those pictures again.”\textsuperscript{139} On June 8th, 1926, he recorded the following:

Ran through Italy for a couple of weeks and was delighted with the Piero della Francesca decorations at Arezzo, which I only knew and loved in reproduction. They with the Giottos are the frescoes which perhaps interest me most, though Masaccio and Fra Angelico have great beauty too. I loved the Masaccio in the Carmine Church in Florence.\textsuperscript{140} Later, in commenting upon his own mural decorations which began in the 1930s, Kroll acknowledged his debt to these artists “...I probably looked at Masaccio and
Piero della Francesca and Castagno more than anybody else.” Kroll was taken with Piero’s work, and it is possible that he made a copy of his Resurrection at this time. Later in the fall of 1926, Kroll returned to the United States for a brief period to oversee the varnishing and display of Young Women for a St. Louis exhibition.

Kroll was back in Europe again in 1927 for the sixth time and remained there until shortly before 1929. In 1927 while they were in Paris Kroll met the American sculptor Paul Manship (1885-1966), who created a portrait medallion of him. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between the two men in which Kroll painted portraits of the Manship family in exchange for pieces of Manship’s sculpture. He always remained fond of Manship’s work, which like his was classical in its sources and especially concerned with depicting the nude. Their reputations seem to have gone into a decline about the same time also. Decades later, when writing his Memoirs, Kroll remarked, “Now, of course, [Manship is] supposed to be out of style a little bit, but he’s still one of the best sculptors we have, and one of the ablest in our history. He’s really a big man.”

Despite Kroll’s fascination with the Old Masters that he saw in the museums throughout Europe, he continued to enjoy contacts with the modern artists of his day, even though his own work was quite different. In 1927 Leo Stein took him to Henri Matisse’s (1869-1954) studio:
Leo Stein used to take me around to the various places. I spent an afternoon with Matisse, a delightful afternoon. He was working on that lithograph that I have out in the hall there at the time, and he said to me, 'you know I can't get a firm line on this stone. It's terrible.'

In his Memoirs, Kroll recalled how he told Matisse to grind the stone more and upon doing so Matisse solved the technical problem.

Then he showed me his collection, you know he was one of those very modern artists, and in his private collection, which was very small, he had a couple of apples by Cézanne which he bought with his wife's dowry, I think, and a little landscape by Corot which was beautiful, and he had a beautiful little nude by Courbet. He said 'these are things I really like.'

Kroll, in a letter several years later, indicated that he may have seen Matisse more than the one afternoon in 1927. In 1932 he observed: “Our relationship was altogether personal except that Matisse once asked me to criticize some things he had done. He never criticized my work nor was I influenced by him or any of the other painters. My influences go much further back by a few centuries.”

If any relationship can be posited between Kroll and Matisse on an artistic level, it is in their mutual interest in arcadian subject matter, the nude, and the overall sense of “calme” and “volupté” which pervades many of their works. Matisse claimed: “What interests me most is neither still life nor landscape but the human figure. It is through it that I best succeed in expressing the nearly religious feeling that I have towards life.” A painting which reflects Matisse's love of the figure is the Joy of Life, (ca. 1905-06, Merion, Pa., Barnes Foundation). Carla Gottlieb, although primarily concerned with the formal relationships which exist
between Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso, has concurred with Barr’s assessment that
the content of Joy of Life is human happiness in a Golden Age. Denys Sutton
also points out that “Luxe, Calme et Volupté and La Joie de Vivre are often dis­
cussed exclusively in terms of their colour and form and in the process their subject
matter is overlooked.” Sutton believes that Matisse’s themes are also important,
because the artist was able to evoke nostalgia for an arcadian world which is so
much a part of the European tradition. Sutton thus confirmed Barr’s earlier
analysis: “...the subject matter and iconography of the Joy of Life have a con­
siderably greater significance than is usually accorded them.” The reason for
this is not only the one cited by Sutton, but also because “the very title of the
Joy of Life involves the intention of expressing and inducing hedonistic relaxation
which preoccupied Matisse throughout his life.”

A painting by Matisse which, although not arcadian, relates to his sense of
relaxation, “calme” and “volupté,” in subject is La Coiffure (1907, Staatsgalerie,
Stuttgart). The subject of a nude’s hair being dressed recalls Ingres; however, in
terms of its radical formal distortions, La Coiffure can be seen as an integral part
of Fauvism. These distortions consist of the non-realistic color and the angular
treatment of the bodily forms as well as the emphasizing of the contour by heavy
black lines.

La Coiffure was in the collection of Michael and Sarah Stein before it
went to the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart and probably was known to Kroll, as was La Joie de Vivre which was owned by Leo Stein, who in turn sold it to the collector Dr. Albert C. Barnes. Kroll could also have viewed it after Barnes purchased it, as Kroll and Barnes knew each other very well. In fact, their relationship went back to Kroll’s Woodstock days prior to 1924, when Kroll took Barnes to the studios of American painters working there.\(^{158}\) (It was probably through Glackens that they met, since Glackens was an old school friend of Barnes.\(^{159}\) Later Kroll recalled that Barnes visited him at Samoir while he was working on My Wife’s Family in 1925 and that he took Barnes around “two or three times to different dealers, looking at pictures.”\(^{160}\)

The years of the late 1920s in Europe were among the happiest periods in Kroll’s life thus far. He records that he was working hard amidst luxurious surroundings, and these years are marked by the production of some of his best arcadian pictures. The arcadian pictures of 1927 included two versions of his garden at Neuilly. In the New York version (Fig. 32; Private Collection), four women are shown reading or standing, exuding a sense of calm and quietude within the setting of the artist’s garden. The red hat and yellow dress of the standing woman on the left contrasts with the deep greens of the trees, giving this painting a rich color effect, unlike some of the strident color contrasts of Kroll’s later years. Kroll avoids tonal harshness here by mixing some white with his hues
and thus tinting them. In commenting on the painting the artist wrote:

The Garden at Neuilly (1927) is a rather interesting illustration of the relationship between the forms of fruit and human forms, and it is interesting to see that in landscape, too. I painted some mountains that look like a reclining primitive woman. Those relationships are very interesting. In doing a figure painting, one can include the abstract shapes of other forms in nature, to obtain a fresh point of view.  

Actually Kroll did not literally include “fruit” in the Garden at Neuilly, but he did use organic forms in nature to suggest the female body. In his earlier juxtapositions of the nude with pieces of fruit, as seen for example in Red Head, Semi-Nude of 1911 (catalogue no. 4) in which the model’s breasts are repeated by the shapes of fruit in a painting to the right, this relationship is more overt. In the Garden of Neuilly the central tree trunk is quite unusual—even fantastic in appearance—in its echoing the ovular forms of the female anatomy. On the left of the trunk Kroll suggests a standing nude with arms upraised, her breasts clearly evident. But then her “stomach” can be seen as the left buttock of a back view. The simultaneous placing of two separate images within the same form is a technique that will be explored much more intently by Kroll in his later work of the 1950s.  

In 1928, Kroll painted two more idyllic scenes in which he continued his earlier exploration of the relationship of the female form to forms in nature. One is Terrace at Toulon (Fig. 33; Spanierman Gallery, New York); here, the earth itself takes on the shape of a reclining figure. The other, also done in France, is Cap Brun (Fig. 34; Robert Cross Collection, Charlottesvile, Va.). Again, the artist’s own
words are important for appreciating the circumstances attending the completion of this work:

That Cap Brun was done in a part of our own garden in Toulon. At that time I was living like a grand gentleman. I had four servants and a gardener, and a chateau with a park around it. This was part of my garden with a view of the ocean, and on the other side I had a beautiful view of the sea. I was living very magnificently at that time. But I never worked harder. I worked very hard there. Luxurious surroundings are very congenial. I really ought to be rich.¹⁶³

In contrast to Terrace at Toulon and Garden at Neuilly, Cap Brun shows figures in nature rather than surrounded by it. But their clothing betrays that for the most part they are modern city dwellers. This is especially true of the reclining woman who seems to be straight from the pages of Vogue in her hat and pleated short skirt, epitomizing the “look” of the 1920s. Cap Brun is important specifically because it is the first example of Kroll’s use of bird’s-eye perspective in which figures are placed quite high on a ledge overlooking a vast expanse of sea with the horizon line quite high in the picture. Although a bird’s-eye perspective can induce the psychological effect of loneliness and in some instances desolation,¹⁶⁴ Cap Brun does not suggest these psychological effects but rather peacefulness and contentment, due in part to the deep, warm colors and the group of people in close proximity to each other.

A final arcadian work Kroll painted during this sojourn in France is Path by the Sea (Fig. 35; 1927-28, Art Institute of Chicago).¹⁶⁵ More emphatically than Cap Brun, this painting gives evidence of Kroll’s relationship to popular culture. For example, in Lepape’s cover for Vogue, May 1, 1928 (Fig. 36), which
carries the sub-title "New York Fashions," the figure, presented against a backdrop of geometric skyscrapers, has a front view torso and a profile head. She wears a low-cut, V-neck suit with a pleated skirt ending at the knees and a rounded hat called a cloche that tightly covers her head. In Kroll's picture, the young woman standing at right is dressed more informally, but is otherwise very much like Lepape's figure. She even has one arm bent at the elbow and pressed against the front of her body as in the Lepape illustration.

Although the standing figure on the right appears to have stepped from the contemporary pages of Vogue, there are several others more typical of an idyllic scene. At the far left a reclining bather looks back into the distance; adjacent to her, but in the middle ground, another bather, nude from the waist up, can be seen with upraised arms extending under her hair. Above her on the opposite shore of the cove a fisherman is present. In the area immediately above the boat, a couple can be seen embracing. From a stylistic point of view, this painting reveals the still lingering effects of Cezanne's earlier influence on Kroll. This is evidenced by the faceting used to indicate the hills in the middle ground and by the Cézannesque palette of blue violet, yellow ochre and viridian green. In the water by the lower left, Kroll brought in emerald green and pinkish hues. With the low key of these colors, the artist suggested the romantic mood of his park pictures from the early 1920s, but Path by the Sea is different from the earlier idyllic scenes because of the
dress of the figures and the more abstract treatment of the landscape.

I would like to suggest that such paintings by Kroll reflect a general trend toward outdoor living and interest in "nature" by the middle class which indicated a turning away in part from urban values, a trend that began as early as 1908. (In Kroll's art, to be sure, nature is seen as partially domesticated, rather than in its pristine wildness.) According to Peter J. Schmitt, the nature movement was due in large part to the reform movement of Theodore Roosevelt. In 1908 the latter chose Liberty Hyde Bailey to chair his blue ribbon "Country Life Commission." Bailey believed, "It is becoming more and more apparent that the ideal life is that which combines something of the social and intellectual advantages and physical comforts of the city with the inspiration and peaceful joys of the country." Schmitt saw the outdoor trend continuing in the 1920s:

There was little doubt that the arcadian mythology influenced the nation's social planners in the 1920s. Engineers hoped to remake the face of both city and country according to its dictates. An affection for nature had become a part of the accepted way of American living. The right to outdoor life and recreation was as important as the right to work, President Calvin Coolidge told delegates from 128 organizations summoned to a National Conference on Outdoor Recreation which he convened in 1924. After 1908, "nature worship," according to Schmitt, was hardly ever out of fashion.

Clearly, Kroll's vision in the 1920s was different from that embodied in the somber and dreary scenes prevalent in the work of such American contemporaries as Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) and Edward Hopper. Hopper in particular makes
an instructive contrast to Kroll, since he was strongly concerned with the figure and is often seen as the painter of the 1920s in America par excellence. In addition, Hopper, like Kroll, was very influenced during the 1920s by commercial illustration—only in his case, the influences came from Hopper’s own early artistic environment, as he was active as an illustrator until the mid 1920s.

In the idyllic pictures by Kroll during the 1920s, the figures are directly connected to nature. In contrast, Hopper preferred to present nature devoid of human presence or with some man-made object providing a blockage against easy entry into nature. For example, in Railroad Sunset (1929, Whitney Museum of American Art) the railroad tracks and guard tower project in front of the sunset, preventing entry into the space of the scene where nature resides. When the human figure is present, as in the later Gas (1940, MOMA, New York), the figure is separated from nature rather than integrated into it: the gas attendant turns away from nature to the gas pumps while the road again acts as a barrier between the clump of trees and the gas station. For the most part, Hopper’s concerns in the 1920s were the anxiety and alienation of the figure within the urban environment.

Matthew Baigell sees Hopper’s figures as reflecting the pessimistic and anxiety-ridden modes of thought characteristic of the 1920s. His figures lack human warmth and tell a sad story, according to Baigell. They are faceless, and perhaps mindless, lacking individuality. Finally, they are seen as cut off
from their environment and almost completely eclipsed by the interior spaces they occupy. A favorite device of Hopper for evoking these sensations is the window, from which his figures peer or through which they are voyeuristically viewed either standing or seated, clothed or naked. In Hopper's rooms, the window often becomes a barrier between the figure and the world outside. Two examples of Hopper's work which reflect these tendencies are Evening Wind (1921, Whitney Museum) and Eleven A.M. (1926, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.). In the former, a nude with her face covered by her hair, looks toward a window through which nothing appears. Only the blowing drapery gives evidence of something happening outside to which she is trying to relate. In the latter, a nude is seated in front of a massive window whose geometric shapes, which are continued into the room, lock the figure into the confining space. Again, her face is turned away; she is featureless and little is present beyond the window. She is cut off from the world around her.

It was in 1917 that Kroll first became involved with the subject of an interior space with a figure looking through a window to the city beyond. In 1923-24 he began a picture entitled New York Window (Fig. 37; 1930, H.J. DuLaurence Collection) on which he worked for a period of seven years. Framed in the window is a view of the towering warehouses, factories and office buildings of New York, recalling Kroll's earlier fascination with the New York skyline and also Lepape's
1928 Vogue cover. In front of the expansive window a man and a woman face each other in a confrontational manner (in the first state of 1923, the woman seems to push the arm of the man away). Neither of them looks out of the window but there is a feeling of tension between the figures and the buildings due to the overwhelming size of the latter. The face of the woman is clearly indicated, the man is seen from the back. Her face is not stylized as in Nude Dorothy but individualized. Although the figures appear oblivious to the scene outside the window, the viewer experiences the window as a transparent barrier between the room and the city beyond. Our eyes are drawn first to the couple and then to the large buildings which are seen primarily in the space between the couple. The window acts as a "transparent barrier" because it prevents the viewer of the picture (and the subjects) from experiencing the city directly. There is a more hermetic, second-hand involvement with the city in contrast to Kroll's earlier urban scenes where the urban milieu was viewed directly by the artist and by the figures within the scene as well.

Kroll's interest in the window in relation to the figure is seen again in his Composition in Three Figures (1928, Des Moines Art Association). As in the 1924 Young Women, three rather elegant looking young women who could pass for models look out of the canvas in various directions. In the center of the back wall there is a window through which a distant view of a lake and mountains can
be seen. Through the window the spectator can see a couple leaning against a railing and observing the view in front of them. An awning over them artificially narrows the opening of the window, giving the effect of a low ceiling. The room appears to be constricted in space also because of the way the figures in the room fill up the space of the canvas. But ultimately the function of Kroll's window in both New York Window and Composition in Three Figures is that of a transparent barrier between the city or nature and the figures in the room. As in the previous example the transparent barrier of the window serves the function of sealing the figures hermetically into the room and away from the larger outdoor environment. But here the three women show no sense of anxiety or personal crisis as does the woman in New York Window, but rather are like the figures in Young Women in their rather aristocratic sameness. The turning away from direct exposure to the urban scene by the artist's subjects as well as by Kroll himself is counterbalanced by the painter's increased involvement with the arcadian theme during these years.

Before leaving the discussion of the window motif, it should be pointed out that there were other artists who were working with it in the 1920s aside from Hopper who could have had some influence on Kroll. Matisse was much involved with this motif throughout his career,\textsuperscript{181} a motif which Gottlieb sees as personifying for Matisse certain social choices an artist can take with respect to society. These choices result in the window being interpreted as a bridge or as a barrier or as a
compromise between the two.\textsuperscript{182} For Gottlieb, Matisse's use of windows emphasized the duality of man in relationship to his home and society.\textsuperscript{183} Her specific comments with regard to Matisse's use of the window are worth repeating here for I believe they are helpful in understanding not only Matisse's application of this motif but also the use to which it was put by Hopper, Sloan and Kroll:

By posing some figures in back, or lost \textit{sic} profile view to look out at their fellow creatures, by posing others with their backs to the town facing toward the beholder, by placing yet others in profile or with face turned inward toward the room, but averting the viewer’s eyes to glance out over their shoulders, Matisse has presented alternately the various resolutions which man, standing at the point of intersection, could take in respect to his obligations toward his home and toward his community.\textsuperscript{184}

Sloan’s figures look out of windows or into them and attempt to engage the viewer or inhabitant. For the most part, his windows do not seem to act as an interruption to the community. This is seen most clearly in Curline of 1907 (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.), where the connection between exterior and interior space is shown. Hopper’s windows seem essentially to be interruptions between the room, the figure in it, and the community beyond. Although his figures look out the windows of their rooms, often there is little if anything to be seen. In addition, unlike Sloan’s figures, Hopper’s look away from the viewer in many instances. Kroll’s figures in the 1920s have their backs to the windows in his rooms (as in \textit{New York Window}), yet there are expansive views of landscape or the city presented in the windows. In addition, in \textit{Composition with Three Figures}, his
placement of two figures on a porch or balcony seen through a window is clearly more related to the formulas of Matisse than to either Sloan or Hopper. Matisse's *Interior at Collioure* (1905, Private Collection, Switzerland) is an example of this practice. Matisse presented an interior with a reclining figure on a bed to the right, three chairs to the left, above which is an open window. Seen through the window, a single figure leans on a railing with her back to the viewer looking off into the expansive view of nature before her.

Even though Kroll's use of the motifs of the window and balcony does not approach the richness of variation seen in Matisse's *oeuvre*, in his interpretation of them he nevertheless seems more closely akin to Matisse than to either Hopper or Sloan. Sloan does not paint windows in his interior spaces; the windows are always seen from the outside, thereby involving both interior and exterior space. Hopper's windows, seen mostly from inside the room, exist as barriers between the figure and community. It is in Matisse, where the window acts as both a bridge and barrier, that a connection with Kroll can be seen. The use of the window theme by Matisse and, to a lesser extent, Kroll suggests another connection to the nineteenth century and in particular to Romanticism where the window was used frequently as a metaphor for escape. In the work of Kroll and Matisse it appears to act as a bridge between the world of the studio and the community outside. But following Kroll's trip to Europe in 1927 his use of this motif becomes more infrequent.
The exact duration of Kroll's sixth visit to Europe is difficult to ascertain. The artist stated that it was two years. The only other specific reference to his visit indicated that it was two and a half years. In any case, by November 28, 1928, the Krolls had returned to New York for good, or so the artist believed.

Early in 1929, from February 4th to the 16th, just a few months after his return, the artist had an exhibit of the work he had done over the previous two and a half years at the Frank K.M. Rehn Gallery. The reviewer for the *International Studio* observed:

As in the previous exhibitions idyllic landscapes and portraits of very pretty young ladies dominated and there was a nude study which, in spite of its suave sensuousness was less firmly drawn than several of the pencil sketches. For an apostle of sweetness and light, southern sunshine is apt to prove a treacherous ally. By far the best of the French landscapes were summary statements of gray days, such as *Grez*. Here he struck a note of sombre profundity which will be remembered long after the more ephemeral impressions of the Midi have been forgotten.

Actually, it is the "idyllic" scenes such as *The Path by the Sea*, *Cap Brun*, *Terrace at Toulon* and *The Garden at Neuilly* done at that time which turned out to be the most well known of the works in the exhibition. In addition to these, Kroll also exhibited *The Gardener's Mother*, painted in the manner of Rubens, and *Lucienne* (catalogue no. 17), which reflects the influence of Ingres in the 1920s. As for the *Grez* which the reviewer singled out, I have not been able to find even a reproduction of it, so obscure has it become.

Later, in October, 1929, the stock market collapsed. According to Kroll,
he lost $40,000. Characteristically, he was not bitter, nor did he blame anything or anyone in particular for his loss. His positive attitude toward life was apparently able to withstand even a loss of this magnitude. His specific reaction to the Crash, although somewhat humorous, reflects his non-ideological point of view towards life, as well as documenting a continuing ability to sell his pictures:

I blame it on the rocks at Ogunquit because that's as good as any other reason and the rocks don't mind being blamed anyway. Made up a good part of it this month however by the sale of pictures to museums and collectors out west. Three recent prizes also contributed mildly toward recuperation.191

Perhaps in part because he always achieved financial success as well as professional acceptance, Kroll felt no need to use his art to espouse overtly political ideas. His positive view of life seemed to contribute to the artist's popularity among collectors, especially in the difficult times of the 1930s, affording a pleasant escape from reality both for Kroll inside and for his buyers outside the confines of the studio. The artist on several occasions commented on his lack of interest in producing politically motivated pictures:

During the Depression, I didn't put any social content into my work. It never interested me. I don't know what's the matter with me, but it never interested me to paint these sad pictures. I always have a happy view of life and I think life is beautiful. I think people are beautiful.192

On the other hand, Kroll was not oblivious to the suffering going on around him during the depths of the Depression nor to its possible causes. In a talk delivered to a class at the John Reed Art Club art class, January 9, 1933, he said:
The stirring of emotional resentment which many of us feel at the frightful conditions we live under, due in a measure to the injustice, the selfish bungling of supposedly superior minds, even in the outworn system of distribution in power here, is in my opinion, a quality of emotion quite apart from that under which the artist works.¹⁹³

Kroll was adamant in insisting on the importance of purely plastic or esthetic qualities rather than ideology for a picture. In the same talk he summed up his position on political content in art by saying:

I have trouble in finding titles for my pictures after I paint them. If I were to paint a superb nude which had nobility of gesture and greatness of design, I would not have the slightest objection to calling it by any label in vogue at the time. It could be called Juno, or The Rise of the Soviet Republic. Its value from the angle of the artist or those sensitive to art would be the same.¹⁹⁴

Earlier in his career, the artist expressed similar ideas: “An artist must never allow his social consciousness to destroy his aesthetic sense if he wants to remain an artist.”¹⁹⁵

Kroll’s first major painting of the 1930s, Nude in a Blue Chair (1930, catalogue no. 21), reflects the painter’s views very well. The nude is rather impersonal and idealized; her blocky features tell no story, not an unusual situation for the studio subject. Patricia Hills, in her observations on the “studio pictures” of the 1920s and 1930s, stated:

The studio picture . . . depicts models, either friends or hired professionals, represented as models, with their heads turned and limbs arranged to make a pleasing composition. There is no pretense that the figures are acting out a life situation other than the reading and daydreaming which posed models do as an antidote to boredom. It is, in fact, an art school situation recreated in the painter’s own studio.¹⁹⁶

The only critic to have commented in any detail on this well-known nude was
Allan Burroughs, in 1936. He did so in terms of its ostensible stylistic relationship to Kroll's teacher in Paris at the Académie Julien, Jean-Paul Laurens. Burroughs compared the great stress on craftsmanship in their work, an emphasis Kroll carried to such an extent that "craftsmanship seems emphasized above meaning."  

However, the visual resemblance of Kroll's *Nude in a Blue Chair* to Laurens's paintings is virtually nil. The composition in Kroll is simple, the forms are geometric and related more to such contemporary styles as Precisionism and Art Deco than to the detailed realism of Laurens. In addition, as Kroll himself says, Laurens used browns and blacks like an "academic painter." And as we saw, even as a student in Paris, Kroll had been influenced by the bright, broken color of the Impressionists. It is the bright color of this school that can be seen in *Nude in a Blue Chair*. Finally, Laurens was not primarily a painter of the female nude, despite its importance within the academic curriculum.

Kroll's *Nude in a Blue Chair* met with almost immediate success, as it was purchased for the Whitney Museum by its Director, Juliana Force, the following year. According to Tom Armstrong, Director of the Museum in 1980, Mrs. Whitney relied on friends and advisors who were mostly "figurative" artists for guidance in selecting artists for purchase.
With her assistant, Juliana Force, who became the first Director of the Museum, she consulted artists such as Alexander Brook, Assistant Director of the Whitney Studio Club from 1924 to 1928, Peggy Bacon, Guy Pène du Bois, Jo Davidson, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and his wife at that time, Katherine Schmidt. As should be expected, the artists they recommended for her support were in sympathy with their own concerns.201

Since Kroll's art seems not to have been regarded by many of these artists as compatible with their work, it is somewhat surprising that his painting was purchased by the Whitney. On the other hand, Kroll's omission from the Whitney Museum's 1931 series of monographs on important American artists might be due to the influence of the Bacon and Brook group on Force, especially as his friends Speicher and Bellows were included.

Although Kroll's reaction to this turn of events is unknown, there is some evidence to suggest that he had been the recipient of criticism, of either a professional or social nature, just before 1931, which might have originated from fellow artists. In a letter to Carl Weeks dated February 23, 1930, he wrote as follows:

Your attitude heartened me considerably especially since it has come to my notice quite recently that friends for whom I have always rooted have been subtly slamming me. While I resent it and feel its injustice, the main reaction is one of disappointment and unhappiness. Even if there were no other results from my trip west the pleasure of seeing you and other friends there—and the delightful support my ego encountered, justified my coming out.202

Despite the economic collapse of 1929, his momentary feelings of resentment, and his omission from the Whitney series of 1931, Kroll produced some of his finest arcadian pictures and nudes during the early 1930s. He continued to sell them
to important museums even in the midst of the Depression. *Nude in a Blue Chair* is one example. Another is *Zelda* also painted in 1930 (catalogue no. 20), which was exhibited in the Pan American Exhibition of 1931 in Baltimore and the Venice Biennial of 1932. These were both invitational exhibitions, international in scope.

Likewise, in 1930, Kroll produced *Quarry on the Cape* (Fig. 38; Mr. & Mrs. Peter Bell Collection, Chevy Chase, Md.). In this painting, the artist has captured a mood which is reminiscent of Puvis De Chavannes, especially in a work like *The Sacred Grove*, (ca. 1884, The Art Institute of Chicago). Both artists use color to create mood. In *Quarry* the high-keyed lemon yellow sky exudes a peaceful quality and it is repeated almost exactly in the body of water to the left. Kroll brings in rich accents of color heightened with white in the clothing of his nudes. On the left, for example, the nude in the process of putting on, or taking off, her dress, has a violet colored fabric with a large admixture of white. To balance this on the far right, Kroll has placed a bright red dress with a yellow hat on top of it. Though the color in Puvis’s *The Sacred Grove* comprises cool blues and greens primarily, it too contributes to a sense of peace. The figures are clothed in robes of lavender, violet, emerald green and pink. Although in general, the Kroll painting reveals a distinct influence from Cézanne in terms of the geometric treatment of forms in the landscape and the more intense color of the yellow-green landscape, than in the Puvis, its interlocking geometric forms produce
a Puvis-like sense of calm. The sense of calm is further enhanced by the use of the reclining figure motif by both artists. This further suggests a mood of relaxation and abandonment to bodily desires. In the Kroll the reclining figure is stretched out on her side and apparently asleep. In the Puvis example, however, the reclining figure, also along the water’s edge, is awake with her upper torso supported by an arm. Both suggest the sensual pleasure of water and sunlight on the flesh of the bathers. An even earlier example which is closer in feeling to the Kroll is Puvis’s Sleep (1867, Luxembourg Palace, Paris), in which the reclining figure is asleep and stretched out on the ground, on its side as in Quarry on the Cape, and is modeled more fully.

Compositionally, Kroll relates the figures to their environment in an easy way. They are not cut off from their environment physically or spiritually. The center figure forms a diagonal which is continued by the dark shadow in the water and the diagonals of the landscape beyond. Her supporting arm also carves out a triangle of negative space between her arm and body, repeating the negative space formed by the legs. The figure on the left leans to her right, echoing the diagonals of the landscape around her and carrying the viewer’s eye to the center. Here, by means of his composition, color and subject matter, Kroll suggests the idea of arcadia within a New England landscape.

Another painting from this time which is quite different in several respects
from Quarry on the Cape but which nevertheless can be related to the pastoral theme is Blanche Reading (1932, The Dayton Art Institute). For the first time Kroll here focused on a single clothed reading figure. In this painting, the artist presented the solitary figure reclining on a rocky ledge overlooking what is most likely Folly Cove in the distance. The ocean stretches off to a distant horizon near the top of the picture, a perspective reminiscent of Path by the Sea and Cap Brun. The figure conveys loneliness and separation from the ordinary affairs of existence in her placement high above the houses to her left. Nature, in the form of the primeval elements of land and sea, surrounds her. The sense of estrangement exists on physical grounds, the book conveys mental escape. In discussing this painting the artist mentioned that a month after he finished it, he sold it to the Dayton Museum of Art. “Even in 1932 the museums still had money, and I was selling things to them.” He felt this picture was very successful in terms of its design and color.

With the deepening of the Depression in 1933, however, Kroll’s finances declined once again. He wrote to Weeks, trying to interest him in another purchase. “I have some good examples here in my studio which you can look at and buy very advantageously right now because the state of Kroll finance is at the lowest point in twenty years.” Even so, according to Marchael E. Landgren, Kroll was one of the few American artists who was able to weather the 1930s with some comfort.
In 1933, Kroll painted *The Household* (Fig. 39; Bayly Museum, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va). In this large group composition, the figures are in attitudes which suggest the narration of a story or illustration of some idea. Three generations are depicted: the youngest sits at the feet of the father, listening attentively, while the mother looks through a window in the background and to the left a grandmotherly figure is seated. In this painting the window is used primarily as a bridge to the outside community, since the figure at the window suggests the family is expecting a visitor. In the lower right corner ledger-like books are on the floor. Given the serious expression, loosened collar and tie, and the open gesturing hand of the seated man, it could be that he is in the process of explaining a financial matter, since he is closest to the ledgers/books. Perhaps this is the “story” within this painting. If so, it could be an oblique reference to the Depression.

In the same year, 1933, Kroll painted another nude of importance in his *oeuvre*, *Nude in a Yellow Hat* (catalogue no. 25), which incorporates the motif of a mirror and its reflection. Kroll’s nude here parallels Diego Velásquez’s (1599-1660) *Venus and Cupid* (ca. 1648-51, National Gallery, London), in several ways. Kroll, like Velásquez, presents the nude from the back with her face reflected in the mirror. Although Jonathan Brown is uncertain as to whether Velásquez exaggerated the proportions of this nude, I believe he did, based on the reconstructed diagram of the figure created by Brown. In any case exaggeration is apparent in the Kroll.
Eroticism is heightened in the Kroll and Velásquez further by not showing the front of the body in the mirror reflections. Velásquez took liberties with the part of the body reflected in the mirror, as the position of the mirror suggests that the torso of the body should be reflected rather than the face. This results in a sense of modesty combined with the erotic display of the body, according to Brown.\textsuperscript{211} At the same time the reflection of the face heightens the erotic quality by adding a note of mystery. Kroll’s mirror reflection also provides a sense of the erotic because the expression of the eyes in the mirror have a “suggestive” quality that will be seen later in pinups and girlie magazines of the 1940s. The primary device, however, that Kroll used to achieve the eroticism within his painting is the exaggeration of the buttocks which are extended in the foreground close to the viewer, on a diagonal axis. \textit{Nude with a Yellow Hat} is a powerful statement of woman as an erotic being.

Although Kroll shows a strong indebtedness to the tradition of the nude as exemplified in Velásquez, he is at the same time related to contemporary trends not only in his concern for the “studio nude” but also in his relationship to popular culture, especially in advertising. For example, in the previously cited \textit{Vogue} cover by Lepape, the young woman holds a compact mirror high in one hand as she looks into it in front of the Manhattan skyline. Another, earlier example is the cover of \textit{Vogue}, October 1, 1922, in which a woman is seated before a mirror at her dressing
table facing the viewer rather than the mirror. The reflection shows the back of her head, neck and shoulders and the middle section of an elegantly dressed man in formal attire standing before her, in the same space as the viewer. Advertisements also used mirrors, especially for clothes and cosmetics displays. In Vanity Fair, another haute couture magazine, a Haubigant perfume ad for Mon Boudoir shows a woman at her mirrored dressing table.²¹²

Although the conjoining of the nude and mirror in western art goes back at least to the sixteenth century, in the 1930s it takes on a different function. As Patrick Kery has stated with regard to Art Deco graphics: “[They] did not depict the real world; they suggested and reinterpreted it.” The mirror served a decisive function in this regard, for, as Kery concludes, “the often giddy or elegant face of Art Deco graphics represented desire rather than reality, much like the Hollywood musical extravaganzas of the 1930s.”²¹³ These ads like the Hollywood musicals seemed to hold out the possibility of escape from the reality of the Depression for the lower class and middle class movie-goer as well as the upper-class readers of Vanity Fair.

During the years 1931-1935 Kroll was President of the American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers. According to the sculptor William Zorach (1887-1968), Kroll was a good administrator:
This group was formed from the more progressive elements of the older art societies and they also invited some of the younger and more progressive men on the outside to join them. They held annual exhibitions and were a very fine group. Leon Kroll was President; he had all the qualifications. He was a wonderful administrator and his name carried prestige. After a few years the more modern and progressive artists began to feel Kroll was not modern enough to represent them and that he was getting all the publicity. They voted him out. I tried to make them see what a wonderful job he had been doing and that he was a man who would not easily be replaced. I was unsuccessful.214

In his capacity as President, Kroll became embroiled in political issues in spite of his avoidance of politics in his own work. The Mexican painter Diego Rivera (1886-1957) had been given a commission by the Rockefeller brothers to paint a wall in what Kroll called the “citadel of capitalism”—Rockefeller Center. Although Rivera was known as a Communist, Kroll believed the Rockefellers wanted to show their liberality by giving him the commission. In 1933, when a portrait of Lenin appeared in the fresco, the Rockefellers ordered the mural removed, which resulted in the mural’s destruction. Many of the artists in the Society were “left-wing;” they not only objected to Rivera’s mural being taken down because of its content but they especially objected to its permanent loss. Kroll acted as a mediator between these artists within the Society and the Rockefellers. Years later, in recalling this event, Kroll observed:
My dealings were with Nelson Rockefeller at the time before I met John D. I told him 'the only principle I am interested in is that just because you bought a work of art gives you no right to destroy it,' and he replied, 'we didn't destroy it on purpose. It just came off the wall in pieces, because you couldn't take it off any other way.' That was true because Rivera did it in fresco. And he had it up against the elevator shaft. Even if they hadn't done that, the thing would have been destroyed in five years anyway by the vibration of the elevator.215

As President of the Society, Kroll was able to get Rockefeller to write a letter to the New York Times saying that in principle he didn’t believe in the destruction of a work of art. Rockefeller finally completed the letter after making three revisions at Kroll's request.216 On the other hand, Kroll felt that it was “silly” of Rivera to have included the head of Lenin in the fresco, but according to Rivera, the head of Lenin was present at the very beginning—even in the preliminary sketches which were chosen by Rockefeller before painting on the wall had begun.217 Kroll’s role in the fracas is illuminating because it demonstrates he was an independent personality who acted as a mediator while President of the society in order to restore harmony between conflicting groups and ideas.218

Perhaps to counteract the unpleasantness of the Rockefeller-Rivera episode, Kroll painted another work in the arcadian tradition, Cape Ann (Fig. 40; 1934, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art). In this picture, Kroll presented one of his few depictions of a half-nude male torso juxtaposed with a clothed woman. At the far left stands a white robed woman (no doubt one of the “robed Venuses” mentioned by Baigell)219 who acts as a vertical stoppage for all the horizontal lines
of the composition. With her leg projecting from underneath her robe, she adds an erotic note to the painting. In fact this column-like leg, coupled with the vertical folds of the robe faintly repeating the verticals of the dead tree on the extreme left, is reminiscent of Renaissance art, particularly Piero della Francesca's Madonna in his Annunciation, a work of which Kroll was especially fond.

It is a very pleasing composition, traditional in its geometric and mathematical basis, but yet a particular arrangement within this tradition. The arm supporting the semi-reclining woman becomes the terminus for a large triangle formed by the rocks to the right and the man next to them. In this composition, Kroll achieved a nice interplay between the completely clothed seated woman, the nude torso of the man and the robed figure. More specifically the latter figure is also seen as the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle formed by all three figures. The male figure is quite muscular and athletic looking and in his youthfulness also forms a perfect complement to the young women in Kroll's canvas. Although Cape Ann can be seen in relationship to Piero, it is nevertheless still an enigmatic painting. The stately figure on the left coupled with the dark shadows of the distant rocks behind the foreground couple produces the sense of mystery typical of Kroll's arcadias.

This painting too can be related to advertising art, but the connection is not to the haute couture of Vogue but to a George Petty swimsuit advertisement
for Jantzen (Fig. 41; ca. 1937). In the ad a seated semi-nude male bather wears a swimsuit. He is very muscular looking and has one arm raised and supported on his knee. In addition, he has the glossy good looks typical of the idealized male of the advertising art that is seen in the Kroll bather also. Although there are many differences to be sure, the similarity between the two male bathers is apparent. However, it is not possible to establish any direct links between these two artists although it is likely they were aware of each other’s work in general, given the fame of each.

Another painting from the mid 1930s takes up the subject of the reclining woman outdoors. In Kroll’s Girl on Balcony (Fig. 42; 1935, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), a figure lies on a lounge and the artist suggests the idea of solitude through a bird’s-eye perspective overlooking a deep space. Immediately above the bars of the balcony, the land juts out into the ocean in a long horizontal which repeats the shape of the woman. Girl on a Balcony can be compared to Cape Ann in the character of its colors, which are not intense. The shirt of the woman has a great deal of white mixed with the red, producing a pinkish tone. The yellow skirt similarly has a lot of white, resulting in a lemon yellow tone. These colors contrast with the darker greens of the background and produce a feeling of restfulness, similar to the feeling in Cape Ann. The feeling of outdoor light falling on the figure makes the picture a bright one, and transitions from dark to light are
modeled very gradually. The painted surface of this canvas exhibits a synthesis of precise and painterly application of the pigment, which Kroll had used also in the Seated Nude of 1934 (catalogue no. 26). The painterly and thickly applied pigment in Girl on a Balcony can be seen primarily in the distant landscape, but also in the cot on which the woman reclines and to a lesser extent in the drapery of the figure. The edges of the forms which delimit the subject are very precise however.

Kroll’s presentation of a figure looking out upon the world from a balcony calls up associations not only to his earlier use of this motif in Composition in Three Figures (1928), but to Matisse as well. Gottlieb, in her discussion of the meaning of the balcony in Matisse’s oeuvre, sees it as conveying an extension of the room into space. The person is thus suspended in mid-air, comparable to the sensation of floating over water or flying. The individual is at the same time part of the outside world, but separated from it. Likewise, Kroll captured the sensation of separation and escape by means of this device, combining it here with the act of reading, which like the balcony itself is ambiguous in its relationship to the outside world.

In the same year, i.e., 1935, Kroll assumed another leadership role in his attempt to bring to the attention of the public the work of artists living and working in New York City during the Depression. The Municipal Art League of New York
based their program for accomplishing this task on the MacDowall Plan, which had initially been instituted by Robert Henri in November, 1911, in group exhibitions at the MacDowall Club located at 108 W. 55th Street. In addition to Henri, the exhibitors included George Bellows, Ben Ali Haggin, Paul Daugherty, John C. Johansen, and Jonas Lie. John Sloan and Kroll, who had served on the subcommittee that recommended the MacDowall Plan to the Municipal Art Committee, had both participated in many of the MacDowall Club exhibitions in the past. Kroll was designated chairman of the subcommittee that met April 8, 1935, and, in addition to Sloan, the membership consisted of Louis Lozowick, Vernon Porter, and F. Ballard Williams. The MacDowall Plan specifically adhered to the policy that a group of 10, 15, or 20 artists, who respected each other's work and wished to exhibit together, could organize as a group for that purpose up to two weeks at the MacDowall Club.

This concern for allowing the artist to present his work directly to the public seemed to have evolved from Henri's organization of the famous exhibition of The Eight at the Macbeth Gallery in New York in 1908, according to O'Connor. The 1910 Independent Artists Exhibition was also instrumental in the development of the MacDowall Plan. According to O'Connor, the entire development of modern art was "inextricably tied to the artist presenting his work to the public." In the period of the Depression, the economic needs of the artist became paramount,
and this resulted in many artists needing to exhibit their work wherever they could outside of the traditional gallery and museum framework. "I believe wholeheartedly," Kroll wrote in 1936, "that the result of the municipal government creation of a liaison between living artist and the public will be a greater understanding and appreciation of art, and a greater wealth and higher standards of creative expression."  

In his desire for the dissemination of art to the public without the intermediaries of gallery owner, critic, and jury, Kroll showed himself to be concerned with a public art that didn’t need “selling,” or interpreters.

Kroll’s own participation in the MacDowall Plan for the exhibition of his work was at best extremely minimal, however, the reason being that he was on good terms with many important museum directors for most of his career, beginning with Bryson Burroughs of the Metropolitan Museum. The directors of such major institutions as The Art Institute of Chicago, the Carnegie Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art (under Francis H. Taylor) in the 1930s, and the Cleveland Museum of Art were helpful in providing him with either commissions or exhibition opportunities throughout most of his career.

The year 1935 was to prove to be an auspicious one for Kroll. In a show at Milch Galleries, May 1st through the 10th, he had an exhibition entirely devoted to his sketches, most of which were for larger works. The reviewer observed that "as may be noted in some of the better known and larger paintings by Kroll, the
color is fresh and pleasantly suffused with the right accents to bind the canvas together. The reviewer for Art News came closer to defining the significance of this show when he wrote:

...there is a freshness and immediacy more commonly associated with a drawing or watercolor than the more intransigent medium of oil. The drawings are as accomplished as ever, if limited by an academic leaning. It is undoubtedly to the pure landscapes that we must look for the artist.

That Kroll the urban realist and later the painter of nudes should be seen as a landscapist attests to his wide-ranging interests. The exhibition of these landscape and figure sketches on canvas and paper was apparently a departure for the artist who was generally known for his carefully finished paintings. That Kroll became increasingly aware of the value of “the freshness and spontaneity” in the sketch beginning at this time is suggested by this exhibition. The issue of the sketch versus the completed painting will be taken up again in Kroll’s work after 1945.

The zenith of Kroll’s career was reached in May-June of 1935 when his work was the subject of a large retrospective exhibition held at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. Although he had exhibited in several major public forums before, this was to be his most important show because of the prestige of the museum, the size of the show, and the more advanced age of the artist. Included were such major works as Brooklyn Bridge (1910), In the Country (1916), Sleep: Central Park (1923), Young Women (1924), My Wife’s Family (1925), Babette in a Blue Chair (1930), Summer: New York (1931), Nude with a Yellow Hat (1933), Seated Nude
(1933-34) and many others.

In a review of the exhibition, John O'Connor, Jr. called attention to the fact that although Kroll's work could not be considered innovative, it nevertheless was "intensely" individual. Particularly singled out for praise was Kroll's ability to "avoid academic formality in design," as seen in Summer: New York, In the Country and My Wife's Family, as well as his talent for placing figures in landscape settings. The exhibition was to result in the purchase of Morning on the Cape (1935, Fig. 43) by the Carnegie Institute the following year and much favorable publicity for the artist, including the awarding of first prize to Kroll in the Carnegie International Exhibition of the following year. In referring to this painting the museum curator, John O'Connor Jr., wrote:

Leon Kroll has a happy and extraordinary facility for placing figures in landscape. In Morning on the Cape the ensemble is very effective. He planned the picture on a grand scale, and carried out his conception with easy simplicity and largeness of vision. Life, animate and inanimate, to Leon Kroll, is full, abundant, and generous, and he so spreads it out in his canvas. The painting is well-organized, rich in color, and developed in a great tradition.

O'Connor expressed the view that "within limits, this Leon Kroll picture is the one in the exhibition that is nearest to the tradition set by the Old Masters." In fact this painting is of interest not only because it reflects an interest in craftsmanship
and the Old Masters, but also because of its expression of the fecundity of nature and woman. As O’Connor pointed out:

The two female figures, each in a simple pose, give the philosophical explanation of the picture; one as reflective adolescence takes in the bright beauty of the morning; the other as part of the landscape and part of the tree and the field, participates in the fecund life of the earth and links it with her own humanity.²⁴¹

Here Kroll deals with a theme he had already implied in his earlier juxtaposition of the female nude and pieces of fruit. But now it is done in terms of a clothed woman who appears to be pregnant (her large stomach is covered by a loose hanging dress) and her juxtaposition with a farmer in the process of tilling a field. (The latter, related to the half nude male in Cape Ann of 1934, is apparently only the second male semi-nude Kroll painted up to this time.) Plowing a field has been seen as a symbol for the sexual act,²⁴² though whether Kroll intended this interpretation is unknown, but in any event the sexual theme has been inferred because the painting has been entitled Fertility in some journals.²⁴³ Interestingly, this painting has an element of the enigmatic about it, centered in the school girl on the left who is shown holding her school books, as her apprehensive expression makes one wonder if she is thinking—not with unmixed anticipation—of a possible role as a wife and mother.

Thus, in 1935 new horizons opened up for Kroll. In a letter to his friend and patron Carl Weeks, dated March 31st, he mentioned this new development:
The Metropolitan Museum just bought the Cape Ann, which is the second painting and one [sic] drawing which they bought. I also sold my third picture to the Whitney Museum of American Art, and furthermore, I am one of eleven painters chosen without competition to help decorate the Justice Building and the new Post Office in Washington. So I must gather up all of the dignity I can muster and go to Washington to meet the Attorney General-Supreme Court Justices, etc. to confer with them on their angle as far as subject matter is concerned. Though I have never done murals, I think I’ll do a good job, anyway.  

Two and one-half years later he wrote: “It is the biggest job I have done so far and it seems to have been favorably received by everybody in Washington.”

This project, which occupied him during the middle of the 1930s, was Kroll’s most important involvement with the New Deal, though not his only one. In no other works do his fundamentally liberal political views find so complete an expression. Located in the Attorney General’s Office, Washington, D.C., the paintings are entitled The Triumph of Justice and The Defeat of Justice (Pls. 44-45; 1936-37). Kroll’s murals incorporated likenesses of Associate Justice Harlan F. Stone into the The Triumph of Justice. According to one writer it was Stone’s ideas which in fact inspired this particular mural.

The artist has described both murals in detail:

In The Defeat of Justice there’s a figure of an awful creature with a mask of decency before his face, but he’s backed up by brute force, driving the workers down into the abyss, and here’s the defeated justice with a book being trampled. I had a brown shirt and a black shirt stopping the press—the pen and newspapers being destroyed—and here were the cultured people, musicians and so on, in chaos. It’s one of the few things I ever did that has such a terrific social meaning.

In his description of The Triumph of Justice Kroll confirmed that the robed figure
was Justice Stone:

In *The Triumph of Justice* I did exactly the opposite thing. I had Justice backed up by Law, lifting the people to a better level. This is the better level, and there’s a nice building going up, and successful farms, and industry in the background. Everything is better, and bringing the mother and child into it, a Negro. This man who is the Law in the picture is Justice Stone, who became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. I made a drawing of him in his office. He had to pass on the sketches of these two designs. They’ve since disappeared; I think Mrs. Roosevelt got hold of one of them for the White House.248

Perhaps Justice Stone was chosen as the main figure in *The Triumph of Justice* because of his attitude toward the artist in general. In later life Kroll recalled Stone in the following way:

An artist is treated like an important person in France. The only man in this country who treated artists as if they were worthwhile was the late Chief Justice Stone. He treated me as though I was the cat’s whiskers, when I used to come to Washington to dine with him. He’d introduce me to all the important people. But he thought I was very important. He’s one of the few people in our government that thought that way.249

Stone’s attitude can be related to that of men like Edward Bruce, head of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and Holger Cahill, National Director of the Works Progress Administration (WPA/FAP) Federal Art Project. These men believed in the necessity of integrating the artist into middle class society, much as he had been in the pre-Civil War era in the United States.250

Although Kroll wrote that *The Defeat of Justice* is one of the few things he made which had “such a terrific social meaning,” the two *Justice* murals make use of male figures from his earlier work in several instances. For example, the farmer in
The Triumph of Justice is directly related to the male figure in *Morning on the Cape.* The poses of the two farmers are identical: both face left, have their right arm extended at the same angle, and are nude to the waist. Both are young and muscular.

In general, these murals also reveal what Belisario R. Contreras termed a Renaissance spirit: "In the tradition of the Renaissance—espoused by [Edward] Bruce—Kroll's work revealed a clarity of form and balanced, classic composition." Other writers also see these murals as informed by Renaissance quality of design. "Triumphant Justice and *The Defeat of Justice* have the monumentality and legibility of Italian Renaissance painting and attempt to communicate a complicated social message realistically," wrote Marlene Park and Gerald Markowitz. Thus, Kroll's murals take a middle of the road position stylistically. Although they are seen as evincing the Renaissance quality of form and composition, they were apparently not academic in Bruce's view, for "Bruce's preference for realistic representational art discouraged abstractionists and academicians, among others, from participating in his programs." Specifically, despite embodying such traditional and abstract ideas such as "Justice," Kroll's personification, although female, "does not have the traditional emblems of sword and scale, nor is she blindfolded. This balance between the old and the new was particularly appealing to the Section [PWAP] when commissioning murals in the national capital."

The "Renaissance" aspect of the murals may be partly explained by a trip
to Italy Kroll made shortly after he received the commission in the summer of 1935. Viette and their daughter Marie-Claude stayed in Paris, while Kroll painted at Marnay Sur Seine and made an excursion to Venice. It was while he was in Italy that Kroll made a side trip to San Sepolcro to copy Piero della Francesca’s Resurrection (c. 1463), according to Marie-Claude.\textsuperscript{265}

During the years in which Kroll was involved with his murals in the Attorney General’s Office in Washington, he continued to paint some important easel paintings. In 1935-36 he produced what was to become one of the most problematic of these, his well known and often reproduced The Road From the Cove (Fig. 46; 1936, Private collection).\textsuperscript{266} The painting caused puzzlement and controversy for several reasons, mostly centered around the meaning of the sleeping male figure in the foreground. An interview with the artist in 1936 suggests the problem:

The mystery of the reclining man, or what did Leon Kroll mean when he painted the man prone upon the ground in his prize winning picture at the International? was answered yesterday. What is your picture all about? Everybody in Pittsburgh has been wondering why the man is lying on the ground. ‘So am I,’ Mr. Kroll unexpectedly replied with a broad grin. ‘You see,’ he continued, ‘I compose a painting in an abstract way, fit the figures in, and later find a reason and a title for the picture. Any explanation given by the public later on suits me all right!’\textsuperscript{267}

If the meaning of the figure is left to the viewer, its source is nevertheless specific, as Kroll went on to say: “That painting was sketched around Cape Anne, where there were a lot of men who worked in quarries. But they didn’t have much work, so they used to lie around. Everything in the landscape is changed of course.”\textsuperscript{266}
Aside from the question surrounding the prone figure, the painting has become problematic, at least in the eyes of Robert Pincus-Witten, because it won first prize in The Carnegie International of 1936 while the French painter Pierre Bonnard won the second prize, a fact that has “embarrassed” Pincus-Witten. Why Kroll’s painting won the first prize is difficult to ascertain with certainty, but one of the jurors was Pierre Roy (1880-1950), a Magic Realist, who might have preferred Kroll’s tighter, hard edged style to the more painterly approach practiced by Bonnard. Roy, who was one of the chief disseminators of European Surrealism in the United States during that decade, had also painted a canvas depicting an incongruously situated prone figure. That Kroll was aware of Roy’s work and perhaps knew him is quite possible, based on a later statement Kroll made in his Memoirs:

At that time regular art education was still the thing to do, and all of the men who later became these very modern artists all went through the regimen. I recall Segonzac and Pierre Roy and all these others whom I knew later, they all went to Jean-Paul Laurens, exactly as I did, all of them.

The essentially retrospective nature of Kroll’s art at this time is exemplified by another work created by Kroll in the late 1930s, Morning in New England (Fig. 47; 1937, Leon Kroll Estate), in which Kroll continued the nineteenth century tradition of painting figures standing on rocks by the sea. Kroll’s Morning in New England resembles, for example, Homer’s A Light on the Sea (Fig. 48; 1897, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), in many ways. Both works consist of a
solitary female figure, rocks, water, and sky. For both, the figure in the foreground stands on rocks (Homer’s rather awkwardly as the feet were added later), with the distant horizon dramatically intersecting the figure (at the waist in Homer and at the shoulders in Kroll). Homer’s figure holds a fishing net, Kroll’s the folds of her robe—somewhat like the bather in Cape Ann. Both works are concerned with capturing the rocky New England coast and integrating with it figures of comparable simplicity and geometric quality of form. Despite these similarities of form and composition, a basic confrontation exists between the woman and nature in the Homer, alluded to by the fishing net, while in Kroll’s picture the figure relates to nature in a more harmonious way. Whereas, a brilliant light on the ocean behind Homer’s figure casts her into silhouette, in Kroll’s canvas, the bright New England light falls directly on the figure, creating more three dimensional forms, and the water in the distance is dark. Finally, the face of Kroll’s woman is not in his idealized manner, but recalls his wife’s features in its angularity and high cheek bones. It is Homer’s woman in this instance who looks more idealized. Both artists took from the personal reality that was closest to them and created individual yet similar statements about the New England they loved and humanity’s place within it.

The year 1938 was another year of success for Kroll. On December 29, 1937, he wrote: “It is quite possible that I will do some more mural painting, as
I have had a couple of offers of commissions, especially since the call for pictures by contemporaries at decent prices, is practically nil. Besides, the offers I have are dignified and interesting and call for everything I have in the way of talent and ability." However, not all of the offers were acceptable. In a letter to Edward Bruce of January 30, 1938, he indicated that he found the interior of the Princeton, New Jersey, post office “awful” and unsuitable for an artist “of my standing in the profession.” Later that year, the artist was given the opportunity in Worcester, Massachusetts, to decorate “...the best spaces that anybody was ever offered—and I had absolute freedom to do whatever I wanted to do.”

However, before undertaking the mural, Kroll was to spend the summer in Oakland, California, where he was a guest instructor directing the summer program at Mills College. Concurrently, an exhibition consisting of 26 of his oil paintings and 24 drawings, organized by Mills College was to be held from June 26th through August 5th. The earliest work was dated 1915, while there were several canvases from 1937 including *Morning in New England*.

This exhibition received favorable reviews, one of which stressed Kroll’s importance as a figure painter and his joyful attitude towards life and its manifestation in beautiful subjects. Another reviewer, H.L. Dungan, in remarks on *Morning in New England* called attention to the realistic qualities in many of his figures:
His skill with brush, his keen appreciation of subdued color harmony, his fine arrangements of human figures in landscapes—all these are lovely to the eye, but we don't like his women's legs. We have seen better in our time, thinner and fuller of grace. Take, for example, his "Morning in New England," a young woman in white bathrobe walking over rocks from the sea. As to the application of paint on canvas, it would be difficult to equal, but our Hollywoodish mind still insists that the leg, which is exposed to view, lacks the grace, charm, enchantment legs give when properly designed.\textsuperscript{267}

Kroll's realism is also seen in the reviewer's comments on the artist's flesh color:

He is at his best as a painter of human figures. He paints flesh as it is, rather than coloring it to suit the fashion in art which demands pink for the academic painter and green-yellow for the modernist. His \textit{Summer-New York} is a good example of this.\textsuperscript{268}

But in contrast to the realism of color and form, the reviewer saw the faces of Kroll's figures as being idealized: "Kroll's women's faces are of particular interest. They are strong, dignified, handsome, reminding us somewhat of the noble Liberty which used to be on the old silver dollar when we had one."\textsuperscript{269} In general though, Dungan, was quite enthusiastic about Kroll's work and perhaps sensed that the artist was at the zenith of his career during these years shortly before the Second World War. Dungan continued: "Kroll's work, in the manner in which he is painting, has reached such a high state of perfection that it is doubtful if he will ever do better, which is a dreadful thought."\textsuperscript{270} That Kroll's best work in fact was already behind him is attested, perhaps, by his last major retrospective held in 1970—thirty-two years later—which included only works he did prior to 1938. After closing in Oakland, the Mills exhibition traveled to Dallas through November, 1938.
It was apparently sometime in late 1938 or early 1939 prior to the Worcester commission that Kroll received another commission—his most unusual in many aspects, as he was required to use glass as his medium. The genesis of this commission took place in Paris, in 1937, when John Gates, the Director of the Steuben Glass Company of New York, became acquainted with Matisse. The latter was so excited about the pieces Gates was exhibiting that he voluntarily submitted a drawing to Gates to be engraved in clear flint glass. After seeing Matisse’s sketch on a finished piece of Steuben, Gates became enthused about the possibility of doing a series of commissioned pieces based on the designs of other well known artists of the day, including Kroll. The result was a series of twenty-seven plates, vases, bowls and pitchers which were exhibited by Gates in the Steuben Gallery on Fifth Avenue in 1940. This is the only known three dimensional work by Kroll, although he had mistakenly been referred to as a sculptor in 1928.

Kroll’s subject for his vase depicted the age-old theme which one reviewer ambiguously termed “mother care rather than the more trite mother love.” It represented a woman who with one hand reaches toward her child walking in front of her while the other arm is bent at the elbow and upraised in the manner of an orant figure. The profile head and frontally viewed torso (draped here) is reminiscent of earlier figures by the artist, such as Nude Dorothy of 1925.

His next project, the Worcester mural commission, was probably given to
Kroll sometime after he received the Steuben Commission. He later stated that he worked on the murals eight or nine hours a day, Sundays and holidays included, until it was finished in 1941.\(^{274}\) The Worcester War Memorial Commission wanted to honor the American soldiers who gave their lives in World War I, but because of the “bank holiday” of 1933 and the resultant hard times, the commission had to wait five years before doing so. Again, putting into practice his interest in the welfare of other artists, Kroll did not submit any sketches for the Worcester Commission until he was sure that another artist, Arthur Covey, who had submitted drawings earlier was no longer being considered for the job. In his description of the mural, Kroll showed his continued involvement with patriotic ideas:

> [In order to underscore] the idea to honor the memory of the soldiers who died in defense of our country [,] I used the theme of resurrection, which is eternal, not only from the religious angle, but also because it means rebirth and in a measure the renewal of a pledge. People of all classes and races who compose the modern American city, gather in peace and harmony under our flag and all that it implies. The gesture of the soldier seen rising from the tomb symbolizes the spirit of sacrifice in defense of our way of life.\(^{275}\)

The idea of a figure rising from a tomb recalls Kroll’s copy of the Resurrection of approximately fifteen years earlier, but the trees surrounding the risen soldier and the sarcophagus below him are perhaps the only compositional elements that seem directly related to Piero’s Resurrection, aside from Kroll’s hard-edged form. The “canopy” made by the trees, suggesting the idea of a sanctuary within nature, is first seen in the artist’s work in his 1933 A Road Through the Willows (Whitney

In general, the Worcester mural parallels The Triumph of Justice in the location of the farmer on the left and modern industry on the right. In the center of each the artist presented a figure of the deliverer: the "utopian judge," leading the people from the abyss to the promised land, and the resurrected soldier, signifying "renewal" and "rebirth."

The Worcester murals can be viewed as a reaffirmation of American values, given his reference to them as symbolic of the "defense of our way of life." When France fell in 1940, Kroll wrote that his wife, who was French, was "heartsick" at the defeat of her compatriots, and that there was much pro-German sentiment in Worcester during the years 1938-41 when he worked on the mural, making his time there "unhappy."

Kroll did not consider himself a political painter, but this does not mean he did not harbor political views on the issues of the day.

Although during the years of his involvement with the Worcester mural he was not able to do any easel painting, Kroll still managed to enter earlier paintings in exhibitions. In 1939 for example he participated in the 28th Annual Exhibition of the Newport, Rhode Island, Art Association. The two canvases he entered were both painted in 1937 and were entitled Ann in a White Scarf, (Catalogue no. 27, Fig. 83), a charming unidealized nude, and a landscape The End of the Moor, (present location unknown). He was awarded the John
Elliott Memorial Prize for the latter work "for the painting expressing the greatest poetical imagination."

The following year, 1940, Kroll was the recipient of some praise from an unexpected quarter—the artist Jerome Myers (1867-1941). Myers wrote:

Leon Kroll has the eye of a hawk, the heart of a dove, which is to say he has intelligence and feeling. What he has given to our art is a matter of public record over more years than he or I would care to say. Leon Kroll is both an academician and a humanitarian—a consummate craftsman yet sympathetic towards youthful talent boldly standing up for the rights of others as well as his own rights—a potent and able voice, a wise and skillful guide in art whose proficiency has been manifold whose friendship is to be valued, who captures hearts as well as prizes.²⁷⁷

Meyer’s remarks are "unexpected" given the fact that Kroll never mentioned him or made references to Meyers’s work prior to this time, nor for that matter did Meyers mention Kroll. In addition, in 1940 their art was dissimilar even though they both had undergone influences from the Henri circle earlier.

After the completion of his three year mural project in Worcester in 1941, the artist looked forward to returning to doing easel pictures. He wrote at the end of 1941:

I am painting easel pictures again after the long spell of mural work. It is fascinating and I find that the large surfaces I covered recently did not make me less appreciative of the subtle unification of nuance which makes easel picture painting so absorbing.²⁷⁸

Although Kroll was eager to return to easel painting, he received two more government commissions before the end of the Roosevelt administration in 1945, two posters in support of the war effort in World War II. Freedom of Religion (1942,
Private collection, Houston, Tx.) portrayed one of the “Four Freedoms” enunciated by President Roosevelt. Kroll believed it to be one of his few “propaganda” pictures.\(^{279}\) The other poster was entitled To Keep Our Land Secure, Buy War Bonds (Fig. 49; 1943, Delaware Museum of Art, Wilmington, Del.).\(^{280}\) A statuesque couple, in classical forms, was ideally suited to convince the public to buy war bonds and thus support the war effort and the traditional values of the West associated with the American way of life. The muscular strength which this figural style exuded would be something that the average person could identify with by purchasing war bonds. With the war drawing to a close, and the death of Roosevelt, Kroll’s involvement with the administration over a ten year period came to a close. He was to receive one more large government commission from the next administration in the early 1950s.

In 1943 Kroll served on a jury for the Thirty-Sixth Annual Exhibition of Indiana Artists held at the Herron Museum in Indianapolis. Although the local media stressed his fame as an artist and his role as a “great instructor for several months at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1923,” (sic) the chief importance of this event is the fact that Kroll took the time to serve in this capacity for the benefit of other artists.\(^{281}\) His second visit to Indianapolis in the early 1950s, during the McCarthy era, was to end in controversy and will be discussed later.

Two events in the mid-1940s attest to Kroll’s continued wide ranging ac-
tivity in the art world at that time. The first was an exhibit of twelve paintings and fifteen drawings held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, December 3-17, 1944. The catalogue introduction to the exhibition emphasized Kroll's position in American art and his craftsmanship:

That Leon Kroll occupies a leading place in American art is due to no whim or fad of public fancy but to the steadfast pursuit of an ideal beauty, classic in its nobility and purity and disciplined by a faultless craftsmanship.²⁸²

The second event was a commission from the Cleveland Print Club and the resulting exhibition of his work at the Cleveland Museum of Art from October 17 to November 25, 1945. The gestation period for this commission had been a long one. Henry S. Francis, curator of prints and drawings at the museum, wrote Kroll December 16, 1941, asking if he would be interested in doing something for the Print Club. Although Kroll turned down the initial request, he was again contacted by Francis on October 27, 1944. Francis wrote:

We are very anxious to include your work in the roster of the publications of the Club, if possible, and are especially interested in a figure subject, in view of the fact past publications have been largely landscapes.²⁸³

At this time, Kroll agreed to go ahead with the project and in a letter dated December 7, 1944, described the model for the print:

It just so happens that the very elegant young lady who was persuaded to remove her stockings so that those remarkably long toes could be seen, came to the studio yesterday to visit. She is going to France as soon as she can get away, so I asked her to give me a sitting or two for the lithograph.²⁸⁴

In the Print Club files there is further discussion of the model:
She is a French woman, who is tall (about 6 feet), and has remarkably long toes and the longest hands he has ever found among his sitters. The artist’s appreciation for her sinuous beauty has been handsomely realized in both drawing and lithograph.\(^{285}\)

On February 1, 1945 Francis wrote to Kroll indicating his pleasure with the final product as well as the “pinup” feelings it brought forth. He said: “The lady has a charming name [Monique], along with everything else, and I am sure will appeal to at least half the membership.”\(^{286}\)

This print Monique is important in Kroll’s oeuvre because of its connection to the “Vargas girl” created by Alberto Vargas which appeared in Esquire Magazine between 1940 and 1954 and later in Playboy magazine. In general, the “Vargas girl” was tall, with long legs. It is claimed that many of the Vargas girls “gazed into space dreamily or looked away from the reader at someone or something else.”\(^{287}\) However, I have found that the majority of Vargas’s figures look out at the viewer directly rather than seeming to daydream. In Vargas’s Dubarry Was a Lady, M-G-M advertisement of 1942,\(^{288}\) the subject’s long legs are visible and covered only with a raised slip well above the knees, as is the model’s slip in Kroll’s print, both women showing sensuous legs to great advantage. More specifically, though, the relationship between Monique and the “Vargas girl” exists primarily in the expression of the faces. In both cases the artist has emphasized a superficial kind of glamour typical of the pinup: a face of a young woman (late teens to early twenties) with perfect skin and carefully applied make-up which dif-
fused lighting enables to be clearly seen without any mysterious shadows. Kroll was most likely aware of the ubiquitous "Vargas Girl," if his own statement is to be accepted:

As a matter of fact, my wife who's a charming person, helped me in one or two cases to persuade the girls to pose for the figure for me, because I love to paint the nude. I really like it. I don't paint them with any idea except almost a reverence, a sort of adoration of the wonder of it all. I never painted a pornographic picture in my life. I never even made that kind of drawing. It never interested me to do that, although they're fun to look at. I like to look at them, but I never did them.  

Although here "pornographic" may mean something quite different than the "Vargas girl," Kroll was probably well aware of the pinup craze in the 1940s, and of the "Vargas girl's" role therein, given his interest in painting the female nude. The artist's recognition of the pinup in the 1940s and his statement about "pornographic" pictures raise questions with regard to his ultimate views of the female nude.

Kroll's attitude toward his models was one of "adoration" and "reverence," to use his own words. He never claimed anything other than appreciation for the beauty of the female form, despite his "liking to look at pornographic" pictures. He further stated:
It is probably more difficult to create a fine work of art out of a lovely girl as a motif, than to do so out of the now traditional apples, cloth and crooked table. Because in a beautiful motif the temptation to be seduced into unthinking representation becomes strong and must be resisted. The passionate desire to express the loveliness of the motif must be held and organized into a beautiful order. Unless the artist does control his emotion and order it, he becomes incoherent and possibly vulgar.291

But he was also quick to add that “a beautiful subject may add another element of enjoyment to a work of art, but it will not in itself enhance the plastic quality, nor add to the aesthetic value of the work” if the design is bad.292 On the other hand, although Kroll painted at least one canvas focusing on innocence, Adolescent Girl (1942-43, catalogue no. 29), his nudes like Monique appear to approximate the forms and content of the pinup and here one finds Kroll’s nudes more ambivalent, as the nature of the pinup itself may be thought to embody sexist values.

Joan Nicholson, for example, viewed the pinup as being exploitive of women and carrying the seeds of rape:

One thing is clear: The pinup is a continuum of titillation, an escalation of eroticism, which began when the first hint of flesh was shown. Why discuss rape and the power relationship between men and women in a foreword to a history of the pinup? Because if you accept the validity of a continuum through which the exploitation of women increased in all the mediums, you realize that the germs of rape are inherent in all these forms, from the first tentative pinup to the last orgiastic poster.293

Nicholson further saw in the genre of the pinup all the patriarchal values which reflect the exploitation of women as sexual objects and their objectification as property to be owned by men:294 “Reflected in the pinup is the masculine view
of woman as passive—an object to be pinned up—and masochistic—existing for men's pleasure in whatever form it might take.”

The preponderance of visual evidence does not indicate any masochistic or demeaning content in Kroll's nudes. In only a few cases among the nudes discussed thus far does one see direct relationships between Kroll's nudes and the ideas put forth by Nicholson. For example, in the early Red Head, Semi-Nude of 1911 the nude has been juxtaposed with pieces of fruit (in a painting) which objectifies the figure and turns her into a commodity. And in the Nude With a Yellow Hat of 1933 there is a lewdness of expression in the eyes which, coupled with the exaggeration of the buttocks, sexually demeans the figure, if not “vulgarizes” it. But the majority of Kroll's nudes are unlike this. Indeed, most of the literature (written during the 1960s, the advent of the feminist movement, though not, as far as I know, by feminists) emphasized the “warm, humanistic” qualities of his nudes.

The model's submissiveness and the artist's domination, typical of many relationships within avant-garde painting according to Carol Duncan, is implied in the artist's use of the model's first names alone for his titles. Here, one feels, Kroll stands indicted, for examples in his art abound: Babette, Hilda, Zelda, Nude Dorothy and Monique, for instance. Whether his models constitute the “faceless and nameless” lower class women whom Duncan thinks were the models for early twentieth century avant-garde painters is conjectural; it seems not to be
literally true in many cases. As far as I know, Kroll took his models from all classes, including the teen-age daughters of his neighbors, as well as Radcliffe college students.²⁹⁸

In 1946 he had an exhibition at French & Company in New York. The show had been arranged by Marie Sterner, who had sponsored his work at Knoedler Gallery twenty-five years before. Among the works exhibited was Naiad (1946, Present location unknown), a semi-nude in a landscape looking out to sea, a portrait of Elizabeth Manship in White (ca. 1950, Kroll Estate), Autumn Winds (ca. 1945-47, Location unknown) and Seated Nude (1933-34, New York, Metropolitan Museum). In general, Kroll’s canvases were seen by the reviewer as “serene, self-possessed and technically excellent, [sharing] a common heritage of careful attention to composition, color modulations and brushwork, and then [developing] personalities of their own.”²⁹⁹ Another reviewer called attention to the small scale, directly recorded figure studies which were the really vital elements in a preeminently virtuoso show.”³⁰⁰ This directly painted “studies” again suggest the artist’s continued concern with the sketch rather than the “finished” painting.

Later in 1947, the artist had another one-man exhibition, this time at Milch Galleries. The issue of avant-garde painting was raised, as the critic Jo Gibbs observed that Kroll “Ignores ‘New Look’.”³⁰¹ At the same time she also wrote that the artist “included a number of oil sketches and unfinished canvases which are
much freer than the finished paintings, and quite revealing of the artist’s methods of composition and application of pigment." \(^{302}\)

The show was seen as Kroll \textit{par excellence} in all other respects. It was an all figure show, the sole landscape being two figures, a male bather and a clothed female. The show was also characteristically Kroll in that his figures were seen as being “serene, relaxed, and thoughtful, untroubled by either tensions or tempers.” \(^{303}\) These qualities, combined with the “cool precision of his polished technique,” reaffirmed what the reviewer saw as the painter’s “basic classic style \ldots never quite in but never out of fashion.” \(^{304}\) That the Milch exhibition consisted of entirely new work while the French & Company show was a retrospective indicated that the artist was once again quite productive as an easel painter and apparently content to go his own way artistically.

\textbf{Dancers in Repose} (1946, catalogue no. 33), completed about this time, reflects in its subject matter the artist’s thematic range. The palette of \textbf{Dancers in Repose} contains intense contrasts of hue; e.g., between the red leotards of the dancer and the green drapery she holds against her body, or in the blue drapery of the model on the left juxtaposed to the red orange of the sofa on which she sits. The contours of the forms are firm and sharp throughout the painting, but in some areas such as the seated nude, Kroll blurs the contour edge to suggest atmospheric perspective. From a distance the painting appears more hard edged than it actually
Throughout the last half of the forties, Kroll continued to explore his interest in the nude outdoors and the arcadian or idyllic scene in such works as *The Pool* (Fig. 50; 1945, Leon Kroll Estate), *Golden Days* (1948, Present location unknown), *The Quarry* (1949, Leon Kroll Estate), *A Day in August* (1949, catalogue no. 34), and *Summer at Folly Cove* (1950, Present location unknown). In *The Pool*, three bathers are presented in the foreground against a backdrop of rocks. They are shown in varying degrees of action with the nearest figure stretched out asleep, a central figure in the process of putting on (or taking off) some clothing, a seated but awake nude to the left, and, finally, a fourth seated and awake woman in the distance who is clothed. By providing these varying states of dress and action in connection with his figures, Kroll's arcadian pictures reflect a compositional experimentation similar to that seen in his studio nudes. The composition is based on the repetition of the triangle but what is ultimately important about the picture are the relationships which exist between the positive forms of the figures and clothing and the negative spaces comprising water and rocks between them. These shapes produce the visual pleasure derived from the placement of his forms in space. In addition, the beauty of his models also contributes to the pleasure of the picture. The nudes are erotic in their bodily proportions and the face of the sleeping girl has a youthfulness and appeal distantly related to the "Vargas Girl."

In comparing these two artists and their works, it becomes possible to see how Kroll's late work bears resemblances to that of artists associated with avant-garde themes. Balthus and Kroll insert windows in their compositions, but for different purposes. Balthus uses draped and shuttered windows to eliminate the world from his dark rooms, while Kroll's windows contain a view of the city showing the window (metaphorically) as a bridge to the community. Indeed, Edward Lucie-Smith called attention to the manner in which Balthus' figures are "claustrophobically shut in." Both Kroll and Balthus are fascinated by the subject of the sexually appealing young girl, in a state of suspended animation. Kroll depicted a young girl reclining on her back with one leg crossed over the other at the knee, exposing her undergarments and thighs in a suggestive way. Ultimately this pose can be traced back to Courbet, an example of whose work Kroll at one time owned. Balthus also painted a young girl reclining in a chaise lounge with her dress drawn up over her knees, exposing the thighs of her widely spread legs.

Kroll's bathing pictures were singled out for praise in 1961 by Lloyd Goodrich, who wrote: "The spirit of his work was idyllic and sensuous; his tranquil landscapes with their figures of bathing women combined a balanced completeness
of subject with precise craftsmanship and absolute clarity of form.”\textsuperscript{510} The Quarry (Fig. 51; 1949, Leon Kroll Estate) is another example of this kind of painting. Kroll produces a sense of peace and formal harmony. The overall mood is one of relaxation within nature. The standing figure to the left holding the white towel is presented in the midst of an action. She repeats the simple rocky shapes around her by means of the towel and her dark dress. The two birds in mid-flight over the pool as well as the contorted pose of the nude inspecting her foot also give a momentary quality to the painting, which reinforces the sense of suspended animation suggested by the waiting figure in the foreground and the hazy landscape in the distance. As in Dancers in Repose the facture of The Quarry is both precise and brushy; the former occurs in the rocks in the foreground, the latter in the landscape background.

The youthfulness and good looks of Kroll’s bathers were not entirely based on imagination. Kroll had remarked that many of the abandoned quarries around Folly Cove had traditionally been used for nude bathing and in commenting on some of the bathers he had observed there he wrote:

They’re half Finnish and half Italian. Magnificent creatures. Thanks to the Finnish element in them, they go swimming without a stitch on. That is, they do when nobody’s looking of course, but naturally I looked. They don’t mind. I’m not sure that that’s so complimentary, but that’s the way it is.\textsuperscript{511}

The artist regarded A Day in August (1949, catalogue no. 34) as one of his “top” nudes. “I built it on a triangle, in the abstract, almost like an equilateral
triangle. It was painted partly outdoors and partly in my studio. He went on to describe the particular light effect that he wanted to achieve and how the model is partly Finnish and partly Italian and only fifteen years old. The model is most likely a non-professional, even though Kroll always insisted on paying his models.

Again, A Day in August manifests a close relationship to popular culture and, in particular, the genre of the pinup and girlie magazine. Like the protagonist of Kroll's lithograph Monique of about five years earlier, the figure possesses especially long legs. In addition, A Day in August is very hard edged and the particular light quality Kroll achieved resulted in a spotlight effect, making glistening highlights on some hard and smooth surface. A similar if not identical treatment of form can be seen in the magazine covers of the illustrator Peter Driben such as Titter, June, 1945, or Wink, 1953-55. Driben's covers emphasize long legs, scantily clad women, seated poses with the upraised arms and hands running through the hair, and light which is highly focused, giving a smooth metallic quality to the flesh. In addition, Kroll's figure has the glamorous "good looks" also seen in Driben's figures.

At this time in the late 1940s Kroll had become a Life Member of the National Arts Club, though he never went to meetings after 1945 because "it smelt a bit of anti-semitism; though two or three of our people are Life Members."
But he did go occasionally, before that year, when Bellows and Henri were alive.³¹⁷ During the late 1940s Harvey Wiley Corbett was the new President of the National Arts Club. According to Kroll, Corbett was “still listed as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.”³¹⁸ Kroll’s connection to Corbett and the Council of American-Soviet Friendship was to cause him much difficulty during the McCarthy era.

In 1952, Kroll was selected by the editor of the College Art Journal to serve on a panel debating traditional and avant-garde methods of teaching painting.³¹⁹ Although he spoke in favor of elements of traditional curriculum such as life drawing, Kroll was not completely immune to avant-garde ideas. In regard to a related matter, classroom management, one finds Kroll quite liberal. While at the Art Institute of Chicago as guest instructor he stated that the school administration was running the place like a “reformatory” and that he got into a “scrap” about it and was backed up by the trustees over the Dean.³²⁰ And in the case of his relationship with the school of the National Academy itself, Kroll did not agree with that system of instruction at all times either. In a letter of 1939 he wrote that he “terminated his connection with the Academy schools because I did not approve of the way they were being run.”³²¹ But in an article just two years prior to his disagreement with the academy he stressed the importance of craftsmanship as the basis of an art education.³²² Although Kroll was essentially a conservative
artist, he could take many positions which were not entirely congruent with his 
art in that respect. His teaching emphasized the importance of selecting from the 
figure rather than merely copying the model in a strictly naturalistic sense. But 
this quasi-modern technique was practiced in relationship to good craftsmanship 
and the humanistic ideal of the "noble nude."

Because of Kroll's growing sense that traditional humanistic values associ-
ated with figure painting were being lost, not only in art education but in painting 
in general, he, along with several other figure painters, founded a journal in 1953 
entitled Reality: A Journal of Artists' Ideas, to put forth their ideas more force-
fully. Henry Varnum Poor described in some detail the group's origin in the first 
issue:

The first meeting of this group was in response to a postcard from 
Raphael Soyer in March 1950, about ten of us met at the Del Pezzo 
Restaurant in New York. I recall Kuniyoshi, Sol Wilson, Raphael Soyer, 
Edward Hopper, Ben Shahn, Leon Kroll, Joseph Hirsch, and Philip 
Evergood... Soyer expressed alarm that "museums and critics were so quick to surrender all the 
values that we felt were permanent, and thus were making of our profession a thing 
of cults and fads, and obscurity and snobbery." Soyer, however, was under no 
illusions about the ultimate success of the group. He further wrote: "From the wide 
diversity of the work and points of view represented, it was obvious this would never 
be a close-knit group like "The Eight" in America, or the French Impressionists 
who were working with very closely related ideas." Soyer continued:
So, like liberals in a free society, it is easier to state what we are against than what we are for. We are for the maintenance of values and liberties that we already have. To restate them means reviewing the whole history of art, or making generalizations that seem like clichés. We are against all forces that set up false values, that substitute obscurity for clarity, and that imperil our democracy.\textsuperscript{326}

Although some of these ideas could easily have been subscribed to by \textit{avant-garde} artists, the general tenor implies a reaction against the novelty ("fads") of the \textit{avant-garde} and its elitism ("cults and snobbery"), which Soyer and the others felt constituted a new Academy.\textsuperscript{327}

Despite the change of taste occurring within the art world after 1950, Kroll still received major mural commissions in the early 1950s. The first commission that he received was actually the result of a competition he won; it was sponsored by the Abby Mural Fund of the National Academy. This commission was for the decoration of the Indiana State Capitol Building in Indianapolis. He commenced work on the three panels July 26, 1951. In a letter to the artist Henry Schnakenberg dated November 5, 1952, Kroll mentioned that his mural decorations "are coming" and that he hoped to finish them in three weeks.\textsuperscript{328} However, he was not able to complete them until early January of 1953. The panels treat the themes of industry, agriculture, and the government respectively. In the first two panels, Kroll depicted farm and factory workers from the early Industrial Revolution to the 20th century. The panels, entitled \textit{Agriculture} and \textit{Industry}, show both men and women participating equally in the labor. However, in the third panel, entitled
The Framing of the State Constitution, the women are effectively separated from the men, who are shown around a table drawing up the Constitution. The women, placed in the foreground, are depicted holding a musical instrument, a child, and pen and paper, this separation associating feminine virtues with nurturing and the creative arts, while practical affairs are controlled by men. The general emphasis on labor, both agricultural and industrial, reflects an attitude especially important in Kroll’s own Justice Department Murals and the mural painting of the New Deal era: e.g., Philip Evergood’s Cotton-From Field to Mill (1940, Jackson, Ga. Post Office), Harry Sternberg’s The Family-Industry and Agriculture, (1939, Ambler, Pa. Post Office), and Herschel Levit’s Farm and Mill, (1941, Louisville, Ohio Post Office).³²⁹

By the Spring of 1953, Kroll and his Indiana murals were involved in the “red scare of the 1950s.”³³⁰ The accusations against Kroll ultimately originated from the House Un-American Activities Committee and in particular Senator William Jenner of Indiana.³³¹ Jenner later wrote:

Leon Kroll, the honorary President of AEA (Artists Equity Association), is an aggressive leader of the Red Art group. He is a director of the subversive National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, and a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, cited on p. 73 of the citations in these words: ‘Communist front for writers, artists, and musicians.’ Needless to say, he was also a member of the AEA’s immediate ancestor, the American Artists Congress.” He was also a member of the National Association of Mural Painters and the Artists Front to Win the War.³³²

Kroll denied ever being a member of a subversive organization. He later
I never was a member of anything that could be called a Communist society, but I happen to be a man who likes justice. I don't like these kinds of people who commit unjust acts, so I probably have joined a few protest groups, I don't remember, but certainly nothing that could be possibly construed as Communist.\textsuperscript{333}

The painter's comments regarding Jenner's attack reflect his connection to the political goals of the New Deal:

So I had the honor of being attacked as a Communist by Senator Jenner in the Senate, and that also went into the Congressional Record. All the things he accused me of! He said I belonged to 21 Red Societies, and I never even heard their names! I don't know what they did, but the only thing I did was to give a little money to Russian Relief during the War, just as I did to all the other Reliefs. We also sent some photographs of American art over to Russia ... The people who encouraged us to do these things—to contribute to Russian relief and to do these cultural things—were the President and the Cabinet.\textsuperscript{334}

When the artist learned of Jenner's speech in Congress attacking him, he wrote that "it made me sick."\textsuperscript{335}

The local Indianapolis newspapers reported Kroll's political difficulties in detail. One article in particular purported to show in diagrammatic fashion the supposed communist symbols used by the painter in the Indiana murals. The farm woman in the Agricultural panel, for instance, was found to have "Slavic" features and thus was thought to reflect Communist sympathies.\textsuperscript{336} In fact, her angular features can be found on several of Kroll's women, the \textit{Morning on the Cape} (1935), or \textit{Morning in New England} (1937) being examples, and these women all have some resemblance to Kroll's portraits of his wife, Viette. Despite the attempt
by local journalists to read communist symbols into the murals, no anti-American propaganda was found by the State Legislative Advisory Commission and the murals were allowed to remain in place, due in part to the intercession of Governor Harold W. Handley.\textsuperscript{337} The attacks on Kroll also resulted in a motion by Congressman George A. Dondero to take down the Justice Department murals. Dondero approached then Attorney General Herbert Brownell for this purpose but was unsuccessful, even though Brownell was “no liberal,” according to Kroll.\textsuperscript{338}

Another event at this time also resulted in the painter being accused of communist sympathies. The episode revolved around an exhibition, \textit{Sports in Art}, in Dallas, Texas. Apparently his painting \textit{The Park-Winter}, 1922 (Fig. 24), along with paintings by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, William Zorach, and Ben Shahn, was attacked as being “communistic” by local Dallas artists. Zorach noted how he, along with Kroll, Shahn, and Kuniyoshi, were also singled out as having sponsored subversive groups.\textsuperscript{339} The artist Henry Schnakenberg, writing three years after this episode, implied that the accusations leveled at these artists had some basis in fact, although he does not support his claim.\textsuperscript{340} As in the case of the controversy surrounding the Indiana murals, Kroll defended himself by writing a letter to the Dallas Museum officials who, according to the artist, supported the exhibitors against what Kroll termed “self-appointed patriots.”\textsuperscript{341} The artist stated that “of course, I was never a communist, and I don’t like totalitarian people of any kind, I don’t care what
they are. I've always been a liberal and I've always tried to see the decent side of things, but I have no use for communism."  

Also at this time, the artist had to prevail against the injection of politics in the National Academy Council, where some of the members advocated the signing of an anti-communist oath. Kroll stated that “a man wraps himself in the American flag and calls that America. That’s ridiculous. I objected to any such vote being taken at all.” In addition, apparently some members of the Academy, whom the artist termed “reactionaries,” sent out anonymous letters to museums and collectors saying Kroll was a communist. Again, the artist had to take the time to defend himself against these accusations, ultimately writing to J. Edgar Hoover saying, “You ought to get after these black-mailing people.” Because of the controversy surrounding the Indiana murals, the Dallas exhibition and the attack by Senator Jenner, Kroll was asked to serve as a participant in a symposium entitled “Freedom and Art” in 1954. As in his address to the John Reed Art Club many years before, Kroll emphasized the importance of esthetics rather than politics.

While working on the Indiana murals, Kroll received a commission for the Omaha Beach Chapel mosaic in 1952 (Fig. 52), his last commission from the government. He was able to complete it approximately a year and a half later, near the end of 1953. The commission entailed the decoration of the chapel for the cemetery where approximately 15,000 soldiers who died on the beach were buried.
In recalling this commission the artist wrote the following:

I was still working on the Murals for Indiana when the Battle Monuments Commission in Washington offered me this mosaic ceiling. I had never done a mosaic in my life, but I made a plaster model for them, and they seemed to like it very much. It’s a symbolic thing. The idea includes America sending its youth across in warships and planes, and here’s the dying on the coast of France, the French crowning a soldier with the laurel wreath, and then the angel of liberty with a torch …

Kroll felt a need while in Europe with his wife and daughter to visit Ravenna in order to study the mosaics there. Although Ravenna proved to be a delightful experience, according to Marie-Claude, the added expense of having to do this, plus the poor working conditions he had in France, resulted in what the artist termed “a ghastly experience.” The Omaha Beach commission actually resulted in a financial loss of several thousand dollars for Kroll because of his additional expenses. Despite this, the artist made “no kick about it because, after all, you go over there and you see those graves, and you just don’t argue about it.”

Kroll’s imagery in the Omaha Beach commission reflects his use of easily recognizable and by 1953 somewhat retardataire symbols. In the lower area, the symbolic figure of America is shown blessing a soldier about to leave for Europe on a warship or plane. At the top, a personification of France crowns a dead soldier with the laurel wreath. On the right, peace is shown by the dove and angel, while a passenger ship returns to America carrying the soldiers who have survived the war. Although the artist had used such traditional symbols as the dove (before he was told to remove it) in his Justice Department murals, here he used allegorical
symbols much more extensively [without the radical political meanings associated with some of them in the 1930s]. The colors are, from the artist's description, "stunning" in their effect.\textsuperscript{351}

After his return from France in early 1954, the painter received one more mural commission. On October 5, 1954, the Johns Hopkins University announced that Kroll had been chosen to paint a series of five murals for the newly completed Shriver Hall on that campus. This would prove to be one of the most unusual commissions that Kroll ever received because of the nature of the will of Alfred Jenkins Shriver, for whom the building was named.

The story of this commission actually began on June 7, 1937, when Shriver wrote his will shortly after undergoing surgical treatment at Johns Hopkins. Shriver never recovered from the operation and died in 1939, leaving his alma mater a sum of nearly one million dollars if the stipulations of his will were carried out. These stipulations were that the University was to construct a lecture hall named after him which was to contain murals showing the following subjects: the original faculty of medicine, the original faculty of philosophy, the philanthropists of Baltimore, Shriver's class of 1891, and the famous beauties of Baltimore. Only with respect to the last mentioned topic was the will apparently quite specific. It read as follows: "[...among other murals and several statues] a mural, the famous beauties of Baltimore—Mesdames Cotton, Clews, Dennis, Robinson, Tailer, Potter, Morris,
Howard, Thom, Williams, and Lurman. I wish each of the above ladies to be painted at the time of the height of her beauty." One anonymous writer recorded:

Shriver's Baltimore was the town of world-famous beautiful women. As a prominent attorney and wealthy bachelor he must have known them all. Among the women he named for the mural, for instance, Mrs. Cotton was known as a most striking brunette, Mrs. Williams as one of the best dressed women of Baltimore, and Mrs. Clews, a blonde, was famous as a daring young lady who used to love to shock the sedate, staid folk of old Baltimore. (It is said that as a girl, on the way home from a dance, she led a group of her friends in 'follow the leader' through the fountains of Mt. Vernon Place.)

Perhaps because of Kroll's reputation as a muralist and also as a painter of the female nude, it was felt by the University trustees that he would be a good choice for these murals, the one depicting the "beauties" specifically. This mural (Fig. 53) is of interest for several reasons. The composition reflects Kroll's use of more traditional compositional formulas in his later murals in contrast to the Justice Department Mural. For example, the grouping of the women in a circular arrangement is essentially derived from Masaccio's (1401-1428) Tribute Money of ca. 1427. Although the three seated women are departures from the prototype, the standing woman at the right with her back to the viewer holding a flower is quite reminiscent of the tax collector in Masaccio's fresco. The flower (which is discussed more fully in the catalogue) is a motif that Kroll used at the beginning of his career in conjunction with the nude. Although the arrangement of the figures is quite pleasing, especially in the contrasts between standing, seated, and bending
figures, the artist has taken some liberties with anatomy. In the case of the standing figure holding the flower, the painter, in order to establish her identity and show as much of her face as possible, has turned her head too much on a profile for the actual back view of the body. This has resulted in too harsh a separation between the neck and jaw giving the head a “pasted on” quality.

Although the relationship to Masaccio is apparent, it is also necessary to see this mural as a continuation of ideas used earlier in Young Women (1924). As in the former picture, Kroll has placed the woman around a central table and in their well defined, hard contours they seem like (archaic) “Greek sculpture” to use Bellows’s term in reference to the earlier work. In the homogeneity of socioeconomic class, the Famous Beauties is also similar to Young Women. Kroll’s women are placed within nature and apparently are being brought lemonade, judging by the servant in the distance who carries a tray with a pitcher and glasses. These women reflect the “languor” expected in demeanor of turn-of-the-century upper-class women.355

It seems that in addition to their mutual appreciation of feminine beauty, Shriver and Kroll had other things in common. Shriver was known as a clubman, wealthy philanthropist and bon vivant: “A painstaking host, his favorite hobby was the giving of dinner parties, successfully trying to make each one more perfect.”356 He was also one of the founders of the Hopkins Club and later President of the University Club whose members recall him as being a “prodigious reader.”357
addition, he loved to travel and was a member of the Tramp Club whose members made weekly expeditions into the countryside of Maryland. Kroll's interest in travel, especially in France, was notable; similar too are their interests in organizational membership as well as leadership within the organization. Although never wealthy, Kroll also had a philanthropic side in his concern for the betterment of artists. A concern for nature manifested itself in Kroll’s idyllic paintings, and Shriver appears to reflect what Peter Schmitt has termed the turn-of-the-century intellectual's antipathy toward the city:

However ancient the arcadian heritage, and however modern its values seem today, it was at the turn of the century that efforts to cope with the pressures of urbanization brought perhaps the clearest and the broadest statements of the meaning of 'nature' in an industrial society. Nature worship continued in fashion in the 1920s, but what was fast evaporating was the urgency with which the turn-of-the-century intellectual had resisted the city. In 1900, all of the systems by which man classified experience elevated the place of nature in civilized society. 'Crowd psychology' and 'instinct psychology' turned the intellectual away from the city.

Finally, Kroll shared Shriver's interest in parties and good food. In recalling his friend William Glackens (1870-1938), Kroll observed:

He loved good food and good wine, and we ate all sorts of nice things together, here and in Paris. Since his wife was quite well-to-do, they had a very nice house and a very good table, and all his friends would meet there quite often. We'd have fewer dinners at the other places, because Glackens seemed to have the kind of home that was good for the purpose. Mrs. Speicher was good at it. My wife did it, too. We'd have those parties.

Kroll spent seven thousand hours working on the murals. The artist recorded his initial feelings about the commission as follows:
Everyday, for two and a half years, without doing any other kind of work and without any Sundays or holidays, I worked on it. But to me it was a challenge. I kind of like to conquer a thing like that...  

If *The Famous Beauties* is the mural that is most nearly related to Kroll’s usual subject matter and thematic interests (and the one that received the most media coverage), it is the mural entitled *The Original Faculty of Medicine* (Fig. 54) that most clearly relates to the Old Masters. Kroll placed the doctors in a typical Renaissance box-like space with the use of a single vanishing point located in the exact center of the room. The vanishing point, although not located in the head area of the central doctor, is slightly below his chin, somewhat similar to the position of the vanishing point beneath Christ’s chin in Leonardo’s *Last Supper* of ca. 1495-1498. Also recalling latter work is the arrangement of the figures within the room forming a band or frieze-like arrangement in the foreground while the orthogonals indicate the deep space of the room beyond. Kroll’s use of the narrow, slit-like windows placed at regular intervals on the receding walls appears to parallel the hanging tapestries in Leonardo’s mural, and on the back wall Kroll has placed a three-part window that recalls the fenestration by Leonardo. Finally, like Leonardo, Kroll has many of the doctors focusing their attention on the central doctor, who with one semi-raised hand seems to be blessing the patient on the table before him in the manner of an orant figure. The doctor’s other hand holds a stethoscope which is partially visible. The most obvious difference between the two works exists in what lies on the table in each work. In Leonardo, the emphasis is on
the ritual significance soon to be imposed on the bread and wine; in Kroll’s mural a female form with sensuous curves contrasting with the geometric lines throughout the room.

The doctor’s glance in Kroll’s mural is toward the beautiful semi-nude recumbent on her stomach before him. Thus, there appears to be two focal points: the woman and the doctor. In discussing this work, Kroll observed that he incorporated a semi-nude into the design for compositional reasons. By doing so he was able to interrupt the repetition of all the verticals made by the legs of the standing doctors. He also referred to this semi-nude as “the most beautiful thing in the world, and an earth goddess or fertility figure.” In nineteenth-century American treatments of the subject of doctors and patients, such as Thomas Eakins’s Gross Clinic (1875, Philadelphia Medical College), it is the doctor who is the center of attention or hero. In Eakins’s later Agnew Clinic (1889, Univ. of Pennsylvania), attention is more equalized between patient and doctor. The Agnew Clinic is similar to the Kroll mural in that the patients in both cases are female and Eakins, like Kroll, allows a large portion of the woman’s torso to be exposed to the doctor’s view. And that is the problem. Despite what Kroll has said about the significance of the semi-nude in The Early Faculty of Medicine, there appears to be an element of ambiguity within the panel. With a female form of such visual seductiveness before them, one wonders what precisely are the thoughts of all the eminent male
doctors in the room? And the way the nurse lowers the sheet, exposing the body to the hips, produces an erotic element which possibly results in the doctors becoming voyeurs as much as men of science.

Although Kroll had been chosen to carry out the Johns Hopkins murals in part because he was the acknowledged "dean of U.S. nude painters," at least in the mass media, the very year the above murals were unveiled the artist expressed unhappiness in his memoirs. This no doubt was due to the low esteem in which academic art was held by the avant-garde artists and press and his inevitable connection to it because of his long association with The National Academy of Design and his now far from avant-garde style. However, in implying this unhappiness he refers to the supposed passing of other artists of his generation and his sense of being cut off from the art world:

It was in 1911 that they had first taken me into this mutual arrangement. We were all friends until Bellows died—Glackens, too—they all died. I tell you, I should have been dead, because all those friends I had are all gone. Only one or two still living. But the group I was most intimate with—they’re all dead. Speicher's dead now, and Hopper. His reference to a "mutual arrangement" is perhaps an oblique way of noting his earlier sense of professional belonging. Yet, the decline of his reputation did not appear to embitter the artist, judging by the reactions of those who knew him, and he continued to paint and retain his enthusiasm.

Despite this sense of estrangement, Kroll retained several institutional affiliations including membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He
had done a portrait of Paul Manship when the latter was President of the American Academy and in 1958 Manship and Kroll, along with Speicher, Barry Faulkner and Gilmore D. Clark (who was Chairman), served on the art committee for this organization. One of the exhibits that Kroll and the others “selected and arranged” was a large retrospective exhibition of the works of Thomas Eakins held at the Academy gallery on Broadway from January 16 through February 16, 1958. Activities such as this again indicate the important role Kroll played in disseminating knowledge of America’s past traditions to the public.  

After the Johns Hopkins project he showed the results of his efforts during the late 1950s in an exhibit at the Milch Galleries, March 2-21, 1959. One reviewer of the show, Maurice Grosser, wrote:

Kroll is one of the deans of American painting. He and Speicher are the two figures remaining from that great expansion of the twenties which contained Bellows, Marsden Hartley, Gifford Beal and Guy Pène du Bois. They were all more or less influenced by Post Impressionism, and formed a group which probably will in time assume a great deal more importance that it is now allowed.  

Grosser went on to say that the show consisted mainly of landscapes with and without figures: “The more recent pictures are dry and dead in color. This cannot be said of the large unfinished nude [Reflections, cat. no. 3] painted along with her reflection in a mirror, sure in drawing and nacreous in color.” In contrast to the recent paintings, the early works included in the show Grosser found to be “richly colored, vigorous in surface; in every way admirable.” A reviewer for Art News,
on the other hand, did not find any noticeable change in Kroll’s style: “Despite the passage of time his style has not changed. The clear-toned, fully modeled, realistic interpretation of the world is unaltered.”

A painting that Kroll executed in 1959 which was also included in an exhibition at the Witte Memorial Museum, San Antonio, Texas, in 1960 brings to a close the artist’s earlier fascination with seeing one motif simultaneously within another, e.g., Kroll’s exploration of the incorporation of the female body into nature forms such as trees and earth in Garden at Neuilly (1927) and Terrace at Toulon (1928). In Driftwood (Fig. 55; 1959, Leon Kroll Estate) the artist explored this problem more intensely and in a way that suggests an ambiguous meaning. The artist has placed the large piece of driftwood directly in the center in the foreground, taking up the majority of the space of the canvas. In contrast, in the two earlier examples, the objects or areas that take on a double identity are not prominent or are in the background of the composition. In addition they are not as meticulously painted. The piece of wood in Driftwood simultaneously has the form of an animal’s head and a piece of wood. Eyes are suggested by knotholes. An “open mouth” is indicated by the triangular shape of the wood on the right. In the middle-ground is Folly Cove with the ocean in the distance. Along the beach in the distance lies a sleeping woman tangential to the “open mouth” of the animal-like head, suggesting an undertone of violence within this otherwise idyllic scene.
In 1961 Dynamic Symmetry once again became a subject of interest, but this time on the part of museums rather than artists. A traveling exhibition entitled Dynamic Symmetry went to the museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, the Carpenter Art Gallery at Dartmouth College and the Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire. Included in the exhibition were fourteen works by Bellows, nine by Kroll and twelve by Howard Giles. Other less well known artists were also represented. The work Kroll himself discussed in terms of Dynamic Symmetry, Young Women, was not included. But the Nude in a Blue Chair of 1930 was. Kroll apparently continued to use this system as a basis of composition at least until 1960, according to the catalog, as the latest work included in the exhibition was from that year and entitled From a Kitchen Window (Leon Kroll Estate).

Although the catalog attempts to prove the relationship of several illustrated works to Dynamic Symmetry by means of transparent overlays on the illustrations, it did not do this with any of the illustrated works by Kroll, including his well-known Nude in a Blue Chair. Since From a Kitchen Window was not analyzed in the above way, nor did Kroll discuss the painting, its connection to Dynamic Symmetry has never been shown. Based on the writer's observation of a reproduction of this painting in the Cardozo Archives, it appears that the painting is based on two Golden Section triangles due to the major divisions within the
Kroll's painting in the 1960s for the most part continued his interest in pastoral themes. What Grosser meant by the terms "dry and dead" with respect to Kroll's color in the late works exhibited in the 1959 Milch Gallery show is not very clear. The "rich color" and "vigorous surfaces" of the early works are not repeated with the same palette in the later works but that does not necessarily imply that the color is "dead" in the sense that it does not work in all cases. In fact color is actually brighter, more intense and vibrating in Majestic Elms (1969, Present location unknown) than the rather subdued color found in My Wife's Family of 1925, almost 45 years earlier. The latter work, considered by some to be one of the artist's greatest works, in fact has rich and subtle color but of a very dark tone in contrast to the high-keyed color of Majestic Elms. In this work a young girl looks out toward the viewer from the lower right edge of the canvas. In the middle distance a reclining figure is seen with her head supported by her hand. Off in the distance is a tiny nude figure holding what appears to be a flute. Above them all are the majestic elms forming an arch with their branches, as seen earlier in the Eden Road of 1945. The red of the foreground girl's sweater contrasts with the green of the middle distance grass while the bright yellow of her large hat adds another cheerful note. The bright color might be a reflection of Kroll's attempt to incorporate contemporary influences into his art.\textsuperscript{377}
Nonetheless, as the 1961 Dynamic Symmetry traveling exhibition suggests, Kroll’s art by the 1960s had become inextricably associated with—or indeed, defined as—academic art. On the occasion of an interview held in 1965 in conjunction with a large retrospective of the ACA Gallery, a reporter dwelt on this aspect of Kroll’s career:

‘Academy’ and ‘academic’ kept cropping up. Academic painting, the Academy of Arts and Letters, The National Academy of Design, The Académie Julien in Paris (Hollywood’s Academy Awards is just about the only Academy Kroll has had nothing to do with).378

The show itself consisted of thirty-four oils plus oils on paper as well as drawings. Among the paintings were such early works as West Shore Terminal of 1913, and Cheyenne Mountain of 1917, but the show also contained a representative sampling from each of the following decades. Of the thirty-four canvases exhibited, however, thirteen came from the 1960s, the period most heavily represented.

Although there was only one review for this show, by Jacqueline Barnitz in Arts Magazine, it was much more positive in nature than was Grosser’s for the 1959 retrospective. Singled out for special notice was Kroll’s Katherine Cleaves (Fig. 56; 1965, Present location unknown), which Barnitz saw as evincing a “timeless immobility,” as well as being “assertive and concise.”379 Also, parallels to the work of Hopper were observed, most likely for only the second time in the literature. In reference to the above painting, Barnitz noted:
The presence of the girl reclining on the grass and reading is powerfully felt. Kroll's subjects seem isolated in their own particular environment, completely self contained. Kroll's work is unmistakenly American in the same way that Edward Hopper's and Waldo Pierce's is. It depicts life without embellishment or illusion. It is clear, unsentimental and broad. 

It is somewhat paradoxical that an artist who has been shown to be so European and specifically French in his interests is also seen as being “unmistakenly American,” like Hopper, in his art. In any case, the fact that the artist did have a large amount of work from the 1960s in this retrospective attests to his continued productivity.

Five years later, in 1970, the artist was again the subject of a large retrospective exhibition. The show was held at the Bernard Danenberg Galleries and ran from November 10th through the 28th. Entitled The Rediscovered Years, the exhibition was much larger than the ACA retrospective (fifty-one paintings) and covered the years 1908-29. In the introduction to the catalogue, Danenberg called attention to the reasons for this:
Why should an introduction be at all appropriate or valid for this exhibition?—simply because it is not comprised of the paintings with which we are all familiar or most readily associated with Kroll. It is, on the contrary, composed of works which, by and large, have not been shown in some forty to sixty years. They are works which were painted when the artist was in his middle twenties to late thirties. It is interesting in this connection to note two facts. First, that during the two decades when these works were created Leon Kroll and his close friend and contemporary George Bellows were probably the most highly regarded young American painters. And second, that the paintings in this exhibition span almost exactly the period of Bellows' total creative output.\textsuperscript{381}

Danenberg goes on to mention the tragedy of Bellows's early death in the prime of his creative life and how Kroll by comparison has led a long and productive career. But the implication is that the work after 1930 is of little if any consequence. Although this may be the case with respect to some of the very late work, it is less true with respect to the work of the 1930s and 1940s, the artist's nudes during these years (such as the large \textit{Reflections}) being a case in point.\textsuperscript{382}

In October, 1974, approximately one week before his death, the artist reportedly was baptized by a Jesuit priest who was a friend of Margaret Manship, who was Catholic.\textsuperscript{383} Present at the time of his baptism were members of the Paul Manship family, including John and Margaret Manship, his wife, Viette, and his daughter Marie-Claude. In a later conversation\textsuperscript{384} Viette remarked how she was opposed to Kroll's conversion, as she felt it was for the wrong reasons. What these reasons were she did not say, except that she believed her husband was influenced in his decision by his love of Renaissance art. Kroll's pronouncements on reli-
igious matters throw little light on the possible reasons for his decision. In fact his Memoirs and letters contain only one reference to religious matters, a letter to Max Weber of 1947 in which he commented on the purported anti-semitic atmosphere of the National Arts Club. His reference to “our people” suggests some lingering attachment or identification with the religion of his birth. Another possible explanation for Kroll’s act was put forth by Kroll’s dealer, Laurence Casper, in a conversation with the author of June 9, 1988. Casper suggested that Kroll’s desire to convert to Catholicism might have been due to the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church: his need for the security afforded by institutional ties like the National Academy of Design was possibly given its final expression by this desire.

The painter died on Friday, October 25, 1974, after a long and productive life. Inscribed on his gravestone at Gloucester, Massachusetts, are the following words from the Gospel of John, translated from the Latin: “Lord, while I lived I took care of those whom you have given unto me.”
3 Conclusion

In this review of Leon Kroll’s life and work I have provided a basis for a reevaluation of his achievements as a painter and of his place in American art history. Although he has been dead eighteen years, the artist has not been forgotten, as the inclusion of his work in several recent books, articles, and exhibitions attests. However, the lack of any retrospective in recent years still reflects a lack of interest in his work on the part of the larger art world. The need exists to reassess Kroll’s art and position.

This biography has shown that as an individual Kroll was solicitous of his students professional welfare wherever he taught or lectured—the John Reed Art Club, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, or the National Academy of Design. Kroll was clearly also an artist who was concerned with the welfare of his fellow artists. His own personal success, however large or small, never blinded him to the needs of others within the profession. Despite his own strongly held views (or perhaps because of them), he was an able administrator who could mediate between disparate positions on many art-related issues.

It has been shown that despite his early and strong connection to academic art, first at the National Academy of Design in New York and later at the Académie Julien in Paris, he was influenced by earlier avant-garde artists such as Van Gogh and Cézanne almost simultaneously. Thus, in terms of style, his early works are
not soigné; rather they have the loose, spontaneous brush stroke characteristic of artists who were not regarded as being typically academic in their procedures. However, in the 1920s and especially in the 1930s his style hardened into what one important critic has termed his “slick” style. In the 1940s and 1950s, he apparently tried to break out of this manner but without much success.

In general, therefore, Kroll’s style must be described as essentially conservative. He cannot be called an innovator, for he was content to work within the traditional framework of academic art. Nevertheless, Kroll’s concern with problems of composition, typical for studio painters in general, did in his case produce successful solutions. His best paintings of the nude contain a formal balance that is quite original within the genre of academic figure painting. It was, after all, his compositional sense that was instrumental in bringing his early art to the attention of the critics. If, throughout his career, Kroll’s art was eclectic, he did not believe he was imitating his sources, and his work within the general style of academic figure painting did not prevent him from arriving at new combinations and arrangements for his traditional motifs. Kroll was also one of the few studio painters who reflected the influence of the popular arts of advertising and the pinup.

Any assessment of Kroll’s art must also take into consideration the great variety within his oeuvre in terms of his subject matter and its meaning. At the beginning of his career for example, his Brooklyn Bridge (1910) reflects the
dynamism of modern industrial society which also formed an important theme within the American avant-garde about that time. Later, in the late teens and early 1920s, he started to paint more bucolic scenes. Concern for the technological aspects of modern society co-existing alongside pastoral scenes can be observed in his later public commissions as well, e.g., the Justice Department and Indiana murals. And Kroll's nudes, whether given indoor or outdoor settings, do obliquely raise fundamental questions about the relation (or non-relation) of human beings to the societal and to the natural worlds.

I hope that this study will be the first step in a continuing reassessment of Kroll's art and position in American art history, resulting in a greater appreciation of his contributions.
Notes

1 In the American Art Annual, VII (1909-10), 153, Kroll was listed as Abraham Leon Kroll. By 1915 he had dropped his first name and was listed under Leon in the Annual for that year (p. 411). The adoption of his middle name is possibly due to the confusion of Kroll with another artist. See W.H. De B. Nelson, “The Spring Academy,” International Studio, 55 (September 1922), 72, for the assignment of Kroll’s North River Front to Albert Lorey Groll (1866-1952). Also see Lorinda Munson Bryant, American Pictures and their Painters (New York, 1925), p. 219, for a reference to Kroll as “Albert” Leon Kroll. Groll was elected an Associate of the National Academy of Design in 1906 when Kroll was enrolled. The antipathy of Kroll’s father toward religion may be another factor in the artist’s use of his middle name. However, most of the artist’s brothers and sisters did not care for their given names and went by nicknames, according to the artist’s niece (in a conversation with the author on December 30, 1983).

2 Kroll had two brothers and five sisters. Of the latter, “Chic” was the oldest and involved with the Second Avenue Yiddish theatre; Lenore was well known as a fashion designer during the 1920s and 1930s; Bertha (“Bea”) was a sculptor, had a gallery and was with Kroll when he met Winslow Homer; for Kroll’s portrait of her see Nancy Hale and Fredson Bowers, eds., Leon Kroll: A Spoken Memoir, 1983, pl. 11. His other sisters were Jane Rogers, who was a painter, and Theresa (“Tess”) Pergamon, a concert pianist. The artist’s brothers were Philip, who was known for his restoration of the New Orleans French Quarter in the 1940s and 1950s, and Cornelius (“Neal”), who was an engineer.

3 Viette Kroll, to the writer, June 24, 1978.

4 Leon Kroll Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, P75, fr. 1018.

5 See Hale and Bowers, p. 2, for the role of music in the Kroll family. Kroll’s father played the cello in an orchestra. Although Kroll’s sisters studied music, his father would not allow him or his brothers to study music as it “meant too precarious a livelihood,” according to Elizabeth Sacartoff, “Leon Kroll: Artist Without Isms,” 47, I, no. 6 (August 1947), 116.

6 Viette Kroll, to the writer, June 24, 1978; also Hale and Bowers, p. 3, for
Kroll's discussion of his mother.

7 Viette Kroll, to the writer, June 24, 1978.


10 Gruen, p. 46.

11 Leon Kroll Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, P75, frame 1018. Also see Hale and Bowers, pp. 7-8.


14 Possibly the earliest painting by Kroll showing the influence of Twachtman is in the Kroll estate, New York City, and is entitled Landscape with a River, ca. 1905. See Bowers and Hale, pl. 23.


18 This painting was sold at auction by William Doyle Galleries, October 24, 1984 in New York to a private collector. Another work by Curran which is in the idyllic vein is Lotus Lillies (1888, Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago, Illinois).

20 Gruen, p. 46.

21 Kenyon Cox, The Classic Point of View (New York, 1911), p. 4. For Kroll's first encounter with Cox see Hale and Bowers, p. 12.


24 Hale and Bowers, pp. 12-15; also Warshawsky, pp. 36-37.

25 Hale and Bowers, p. 14. Bruce Robertson however, in Reckoning with Winslow Homer: His Late Paintings and Their Influence (Cleveland Museum of Art, September 19 - November 18, 1990), p. 119, saw Homer's influence on Kroll as being "momentary."

26 The Boston Museum had only two Homers in its collection prior to 1908. These were The Fog Warning and The Lookout—"All's Well", acquired in 1894 and 1899 respectively.


29 Goodrich, p. 27.


32 Hale and Bowers, p. 24. At Vernon, he painted Bridge at Vernon (1910, present location unknown), most likely his first bridge picture. See Hale and Bowers, pl. 45.


34 Hale and Bowers, p. 21.

35 Hale and Bowers, p. 111.

36 Eliot Clark, History of the National Academy of Design (New York, 1954), p. 149. The title and location of the prize winning work are not known.

37 Hale and Bowers, p. 24. Kroll here probably refers mainly to the Old Masters, but he could also have seen several outstanding arcadian pictures in the Italian manner by the German painter Anselm Feuerbach (1829-1880). According to David C. Preyer, Feuerbach's Ricordo di Tivoli included a rocky glen, bubbling pool, waterfall in which a young girl is seated. Below her a half-draped boy reclines, playing a guitar. These are elements that Kroll was to include in many of his later arcadian pictures. Also in the Dresden Gallery are Feuerbach's Springtime and Concert; the latter contains four draped women making music in a grove. Another late nineteenth-century painter who was well represented in this gallery and who was also interested in the theme of the golden age was Hans von Mareés (1837-1887). See David C. Preyer, The Art of the Berlin Galleries (Boston, 1912), pp. 301-305. Although Kroll mentioned only Dresden here, he was also in Berlin.

38 Kroll was somewhat vague about how long he taught at the National Academy. In 1957 he stated he taught “until about 25 years ago,” and then that he taught for “20 years.” See Hale and Bowers, p. 24. For a later photo of Kroll in his life class see Lois Fink and Joshua C. Taylor, Academy: The Academic Tradition in American Art (Washington, D.C., National Collection of Fine Arts, June 6 - September 1, 1975), p. 63.

39 The bridge was a popular subject also among the American avant-garde as well as the European avant-garde in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. An example from the latter is Andre Derain's London Bridge (1905, Museum of Modern Art, New York).

In this emphasis on bridges and skyscrapers, Kroll seems to have interpreted what Vincent Scully called the two most significant images of American experience. As Scully shows, the Brooklyn Bridge was seen as a metaphor for the "open road" of Walt Whitman, while the skyscraper was the "open road" turned upward able to keep going when land was no longer available. See Vincent Scully, Jr., Modern Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy (New York, 1974), p. 17. The glowing, candle-like quality seen here suggests a connection to Georgia O’Keeffe’s use of glowing natural forms in connection with her skyscraper paintings. Also, Alfred Stieglitz worked similarly. In referring to the latter artist Merrill Schleir wrote: “O’Keeffe divorces the skyscraper from its urban associations and integrates it in nature. In The Shelton with Sunspots of 1926 the architecture is incidental to the gossamer glow of the sun’s reflections over its surface, ….” See Merrill Schleir, The Skyscraper in American Art (Ann Arbor, 1986), p. 110. Ivan Narodny, p. 86 is one of the few writers to observe the poetic quality of Kroll’s city scenes.

Landscape—Two Rivers (1917) and Central Park (1922) will be discussed later. The bridge is no longer the dominant motif in these works.


Edward Hopper (New York, N.D.), p. 27. Also Hale and Bowers, pp. 30, 47 for Kroll's views on Hopper.

48 For illustrations, see Hale and Bowers, pl. nos. 30, 46, 47.


50 Eleanor Tufts, American Women Artists 1830-1930 (Wash. D.C., National Museum of Women in the Arts, 10 April - 14 June, 1987), no. 55. The painting illustrated by Tufts is of two large standing female nudes in a brighter palette than Kroll used at that time. It is easy to see why Kroll would have been attracted to her art because of the subject and realistic modeling.

51 See Eliot C. Clark, John Twachtman (New York, 1924), p. 33, for a discussion of the urban snow scene. Also, n. 15 above.

52 Hale and Bowers, p. 31, and Oral History, p. 143.

53 Another painting of Broadway, very similar to the Lionel Kroll example in San Francisco but done in spring, is his Upper Broadway (ca. 1915, Tennessee Botanical Gardens, Nashville). The thickly brushed paint and purplish shadows are also apparent. See Art Student League News, 23, no. 8 (December 1970), 1, and International Studio, 89 (February 1921), 37 for Riverside Drive-Cutting Ice. For other examples see Eugen Neuhaus, Galleries of the Exposition (San Francisco, 1915), p. 76. Neuhaus mentioned that Kroll received a bronze medal for several of his urban scenes at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915.

54 Kroll stated that Eddy bought eleven other paintings from him during the week of the Armory Show and that he made $10,000. See Hale and Bowers, p. 32. The only other painting by Kroll owned by Eddy that I know of is The Lake in the Mountains, and it was painted four years later en route to New Mexico. It is presently in the Flint Art Institute. Kroll had only one work in the exhibition. See The Armory Show, International Exhibition of Modern Art, 1913, 1 (New York, reprint ed., 1972), p. 21, n. 85. Eddy also purchased Still Life (1913, Flint Institute of Arts), in which objects are placed in front of a window. Through the window a tiny figure can be seen walking on a street in a rainy day. This is apparently Kroll's first use of the window motif.

55 Theodore Roosevelt, "An Art Exhibition," in History as Literature and Other Essays (New York, 1913), p. 309. Also see Joseph Masheck, "Teddy's Taste:

56 Brown, p. 32.


58 Bryant, p. 219.


61 For a discussion of the female nude in relationship to fruit, see Linda Nochlin, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth Century Art," in Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Woman as Sex Object* (New York, 1972), pp. 8-16. She points out that the association of fruit with woman's anatomy exists in both high and low art and is quite old. Also, Lise Vogel, "Erotica, the Academy, and Art Publishing: A Review of Woman as Sex Object. 'Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970', New York, 1972." *Art Journal*, 35 (Summer 1976), 384. The earliest work that I have found in which the female figure is associated with fruit is by Ambrogio di Predis (ca. 1450-56-after 1506), and is entitled *Girl with Cherries* (n.d., Metropolitan Museum, N.Y.). See *International Studio*, 89 (January 1928), 37.

62 A.M.D., *International Studio*, 71 (February 1921), 36. The Bull Ring, (1914; present location unknown), also can be related to the influence of Van Gogh in its heavy, agitated strokes in the foreground. See Hale and Bowers, pl. 25.


64 Hale and Bowers, p. 109.

65 Hale and Bowers, p. 36.

66 Hale and Bowers, p. 36.

67 Portland, Me. Museum of Art Bulletin, "Recent Accession," March, 1982, n.p. In discussing one of the portraits, the writer of this bulletin finds its appearance a "sudden" event. In fact Kroll had been doing portraits since the very Rembrandtesque *The Artist's Mother* (1906, Private Collection). And there were
others from the 1912-15 period including **Laughing Girl** (Fig. 15; 1912-15, Private Collection).


69 Egbert and Persons, p. 716. Also Braider, p. 97.


71 Kroll stated that he painted the portrait of Laurent at Ogunquit, Maine where he had a studio and spent a brief time. See Kroll, *Oral History*, p. 127. It was apparently at this time that Kroll met Hamilton Easter Field (1873-1922) who was a patron of Laurent. Field purchased a couple of drawings from Kroll. But, unlike Laurent, Kroll was not influenced by Field's oriental art collection and felt uncomfortable in his presence. See Hale and Bowers, pp. 39-40, and "The Hamilton Easter Field Papers," *Archives of American Art*, roll, N68-2. For a discussion of both Laurent and Field see Rosamund Frost, "Laurent: Frames to Figures, Brittany to Brooklyn," *Art News*, 40 (April 1, 1941), 10-11, 37. Bellows also spent the summer of 1913 at Ogunquit where he was "uncomfortable." See Morgan, p. 191.


73 Hale and Bowers, p. 110.


76 Donald Braider, *George Bellows and the Ashcan School of Painting* (New York, 1971), p. 93. Morgan also says the same thing, see p. 183. But apparently Bellows also spent time at Ogunquit during the summer of 1915 as well as 1914. See Morgan, p. 191.

77 Mason and Rudman, pp. 18, 57. Mason mentions Bellows spending the
summer at Ogunquit not in 1914, but in 1915.

78 Hale and Bowers, p. 42. This, despite the fact that Kroll disagreed with Bellows about almost everything having to do with art, especially color. See Braider, pp. 65, 92. For an illustration of Kroll’s The Bridge at Eddyville, see Antiques, 137 no. 5 (May 1990), 1037. It was one of the artist’s last pictures in which the bridge dominates the scene.


80 For Davies’ “turning his back on reality,” see Sheldon Reich, “The Paradoxes of Arthur B. Davies,” Apollo, 92 (November 1970), 366. See no. 70 (Intro.) in which Thieme and Becker refer to Kroll’s art as being “idyllic” in modern dress. Another nineteenth century painter who created an idealized arcadian landscape was Thomas Dewing whose arcadias are inhabited with “fashionable sylphs” according to Hobbs. See p. 26. However, Kroll had been aware of Puvis’ work after having seen his murals in the Boston Public Library when he returned from Prouts Neck, Maine with Warshawsky. His teacher, Burroughs, was also important no doubt in this respect.

81 Gerdts, p. 122.


83 Dodd, n.p.

84 Hale and Bowers, p. 42.

85 Hale and Bowers, p. 43.

86 Hale and Bowers, p. 109.

87 Kroll was to consistently reflect influences much later than his initial exposure throughout his career. This is seen especially with respect to the influence of Homer as will be shown later.

88 Hale and Bowers, p. 44. For an illustration, see Wolf’s, Important Paintings and Sculpture at Auction, Cleveland, Ohio, (September 19, 1991), p. 69, no. 143.
89 Hale and Bowers, p. 15.


92 For a review of this work, see “Leon Kroll’s Vivid Power,” American Art News, 20 (April 29, 1922), 5, 8.


96 Hale and Bowers, pp. 53-54.

97 Hale and Bowers, pp. 53-54.


100 Jay Hambridge, Dynamic Symmetry: The Greek Vase (New Haven, 1920), pp. 11, 12, and 37 for the “whirling square” rectangle. Also Braider, p. 107.
According to Milton Brown, this attempt to reduce painting to a mathematical formula represented a new academicism or pseudo-science in its concern for empirically based rules. See Brown, p. 106.

Letter to Carl Weeks, November 27, 1925, from St. Jean, Cap Ferrat, Alpes Maritimes, France. Archives of Iowa State Education Association, Des Moines, Iowa.

Letter to Carl Weeks, November 27, 1925.

Letter to Carl Weeks, February 21, 1925.

Hale and Bowers, p. 110. Potter Palmer Gold Medal, $1,000 prize, 37th American Painting and Sculpture Exhibition, Art Institute of Chicago; Honorable Mention, Carnegie International, 1925.

Letter to Carl Weeks, November 27, 1925, p. 2.

Kroll mentioned that after his return from his honeymoon in Italy he "was pretty far down in my capital by that time, and was discouraged a little bit. I decided I simply had to invest in my own pictures instead of trying those things I knew nothing about in Wall Street and all that sort of thing. I had bought some securities, you know, which didn’t work out. That was a stupid thing for me to do, anyway.” See Hale and Bowers, pp. 58, 59-60.

Letter to Carl Weeks, November 27, 1925, p. 2. He does refer to the woman at the left as being his wife and looking like the Goddess “Juno.” See Kroll, Oral History, p. 145.

Hale and Bowers, p. 59. At the Art Student’s League for example there were no entrance requirements, attendance records or grades. Kroll, having been a student there briefly under Twachtman, probably carried this method of teaching with him to the National Academy.

Hale and Bowers, p. 59. He received $5,000 for seven months, p. 58.

It was at the Des Moines show that he was able to sell his painting Young Women to the collector Carl Weeks. This enabled Kroll to make his fifth trip to Europe during the summer of 1925.

Kroll said he painted it in France and Chicago. See Kroll, Oral History, pp. 149-150. The fact that he stated the model was a minister’s daughter suggests
that it was painted in the United States.

113 Kroll, Oral History, p. 150.

114 Brown, p. 154. The tradition can be traced back much farther in European art. The two artists that Brown referred to are Jan Vermeer and Gustave Courbet.


116 Larkin, p. 301.


119 Malcolm Vaughan, quoted in “Speicher’s Triumph,” Art Digest, 8 (January 15, 1934), 14.

120 Henry McBride, quoted in “Speicher’s Triumph,” Art Digest, 8 (January 15, 1934), 5. He believed that a popular vote would show Speicher to be No. 1 in popularity among living American artists.

121 Walter Gutman, “Leon Kroll,” Art in America, 18 (October 1930), 300. He also saw this nude as being related to the American cinema in “being so perfect, so irresistible, and so inhuman.” It should be recalled that Kroll’s sister, Lenore, was a fashion designer in the Squibb Building with whom Kroll was on good terms and with whose work he was familiar.


124 Claude Lepape and Thierry Defert, From the Ballets Russes to Vogue:

125 Lepape and Defert, p. 144. The authors mention that creative artists of Paris came in “droves,” including graphic artists, theatre people, painters, while Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald escaped to the ancient civilizations of Europe.

126 Lepape and Defert, p. 145.


128 Zabel, 378.

129 Hale and Bowers, p. 71.

130 Patricia Frantz Kery, Art Deco Graphics (New York, 1986), p. 20. Kery believed that Art Deco was very diverse; its only common denominator was an intangible: a mood representing modernity to people in the first half of the twentieth century.

131 Kery, p. 20.

132 Kroll stated that he “designed” it in Chicago. See Oral History, p. 151.


134 Pincus-Witten, p. 78.

135 It received the Temple Gold Medal from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1927.

136 Letter to Carl Weeks, March 1, 1926.

137 Letter to Carl Weeks, March 31, 1926.

138 Letter to Carl Weeks, March 31, 1926.

139 Letter to Carl Weeks, May 22, 1926. Also Hale and Bowers, pp. 69, 111.

140 Letter to Carl Weeks, June 8, 1926.
This was seen by the writer in the Kroll house in Folly Cove in 1980.

Letters to Carl Weeks, May 22 and June 8, 1926.


See Hale and Bowers, pp. 91-92 for Kroll’s reference to the portraits they did of each other and other works they exchanged. In a conversation of this writer with Kroll’s daughter of June 15, 1989, Marie-Claude remarked that the Manships gave lavish parties and were close with the Krolls in New York and at Gloucester.

Hale and Bowers, p. 107-108.

Hale and Bowers, pp. 107-108.

Hale and Bowers, p. 69.

Hale and Bowers, p. 69.

Letter to Carl Weeks, October 15, 1932. In a letter several years earlier Kroll wrote: “Painting here in Europe is interesting mainly because I can go to the Louvre and compare my own ideas with those of the masters I like. Poussin interested me with his quiet beauty for years, and my interest in him has not subsided. While he isn’t obvious nor stunning—he is very deep and knowing.” Letter to Carl Weeks, June 8, 1926. He was especially fond of Piero della Francesca not only because of his art but because of his public service. Kroll mentioned that Piero was a “municipal counselor” and an “officer in the art field.” See Hale and Bowers, pp. 83, 111. However, Kroll’s influences also derive from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were incorporated into his art throughout his career.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Matisse: His Art and His Public (New York, 1951), p. 122. Kroll also expressed a religious view towards life in his comments on the nude. He states: “I love to paint the nude. I really like it. I don’t paint nudes, though with any idea except almost a reverence, a sort of adoration of the wonder of it all.”

Carla Gottlieb, “‘The Joy of Life’: Matisse, Picasso and Cézanne,” College Art Journal, 18 (Winter 1958), 108. Barr further wrote that Gilbert Highet has shown that “iconographically The Joy of Life is a mixture of Bacchanale with
wildly dancing figures, a girl twining ivy in her hair, etc., and pastoral with woodwind music, goats, etc. Occasionally, at a vintage festival for instance, the two could be associated.” See Barr, pp. 532-33.


154 Sutton, 361.

155 Barr, p. 89.

156 Barr, p. 89.


158 Hale and Bowers, p. 65.

159 Hale and Bowers, p. 65.

160 Hale and Bowers, p. 66.

161 Hale and Bowers, p. 113.

162 This ambiguous relationship between natural and human forms occurs about the same time Kroll met the Spanish Surrealist Joan Miró in 1927. See Kroll, Oral History, p. 40. Roland Penrose has indicated that Miró was also involved with the implications of the female form and its simultaneous reference to the earth as an earth mother. This is seen in The Potato (1928, Metropolitan Museum) in which the woman’s body runs the entire height of the canvas. See Roland Penrose, Miró (New York, 1970), pp. 63-64. As Kroll’s forms in Terrace at Toulon are realistic and exist within a rational space, it would be too much to claim that his work has surreal intentions beyond the thematic parallels. The simultaneous referring of the earth to a nude female can be seen in later artists including Alexandre Hogue (1898– ). Hogue’s Mother Earth Laid Bare (1938, Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma) also shows a female nude within the forms of the parched earth. In a letter to me dated September 1, 1988, Hogue stated that although Mother Earth Laid Bare has “frequently been referred to as surreal it had not occurred to me as such...” For a further discussion of the relationship of Surrealism to Hogue’s work, see Lea Rossen DeLong, Nature’s Forms/Nature’s Forces, intro. by Matthew

163 Kroll, Oral History, p. 154. Kroll remarked that Edward Bruce, the future head of the New Deal arts program, had dinner on his terrace at Toulon and that he (Kroll) and Viette “were very magnificent hosts.” See Hale and Bowers, p. 71.

164 John L. Ward, American Realist Painting: 1945-1980, p. 20, discussed the sense of loneliness and abandonment achieved by the bird’s-eye perspective in the work of Ben Shahn (1898-1969) and Andrew Wyeth (b. 1917- ).

165 Courtney Donnell, in a letter to the writer, September 3, 1981, dated it “ca. 1929.”


167 Schmitt, Back to Nature: the Arcadian Myth in Urban America, p. 4. These sentiments were expressed by avant-garde artists. Merrill Schleir, in discussing the work of Stieglitz and O’Keefe, pointed out the conflict they expressed in their writings and art between urban and rural values. Merrill Schleier, The Skyscraper in American Art, 1890-1931 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1986), pp. 108-109 notes: “Yet on examination of their works in the context of their views on art, their statements concerning the city, and their periodic retreats to the country indicates a profound ambivalence toward the skyscraper . . . . Jointly, their repeated trips to Lake George are symptomatic of the fundamental tension artists felt between the dynamic, energizing character of the metropolis and the healthful, renewing qualities of rural living. Artists’ colonies in unspoiled settings, such as Ridgefield, Woodstock, and Taos, also signify such a rift.”


170 Matthew Baigell, “The Silent Witness of Edward Hopper,” Arts Maga-
zine, 49 (September 1974), 29.


172 Baigell, pp. 29, 33.

173 Baigell, p. 29.


175 Baigell, p. 31.

176 Baigell, p. 31.

177 Baigell, p. 31.

178 Kroll’s portrait of Mrs. Charles Dougis, (1917, Kroll Estate) predates Sloan’s *Stein at the Window* by one year. See Hale and Bowers, pl. 12.

179 Hale and Bowers, plates 96-98.

180 Kroll has identified the models for the couple as being A. Hyatt Mayor and Viette. See Kroll, Oral History, p. 148. The location was the “Old Murray Hotel,” where the Krolls lived for a month.


182 Gottlieb, p. 401.

183 Gottlieb, p. 401.

184 Gottlieb, p. 401.


186 Hale and Bowers, p. 69.

Letter to Carl Weeks, November 28, 1928. In a letter of November 7, 1929 to Weeks he again expressed a wish to return to Europe for the summer.


Hale and Bowers, p. 117.


Kroll, pp. 473-74.


Hills and Tarbell, p. 71.


Hale and Bowers, p. 21.

In a letter to the writer dated February 2, 1987, Patterson Sims, Associate Curator, Whitney Museum stated that “Juliana Force, director of the Whitney Museum most likely selected it.”

Hills and Tarbell, p. 7.

Hills and Tarbell, p. 7.

For additional illustrations of this painting see Antiques, 117 (March 1980), 472, and Hale and Bowers, pl. 134 for an earlier state.

The Sacred Grove was given to The Art Institute of Chicago by Mrs. Potter Palmer in 1922 three years before Kroll’s tenure there. Kroll had first seen the work of Puvis in the Boston Public Library, where he, Abel Warshawsky and Bertha Kroll had stopped off while returning from Prouts Neck, Maine in 1910.

A very early reference associating “books” with woman was made by Artemidorus (fl. 2nd c. A.D.): “In dreams, a writing tablet signifies a woman, since it receives the imprint of all kinds of letters.” Oneiromcritica, 2, 45. Quoted in Marina Warner, Monuments & Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form (New York, 1985), p. vii. For a discussion of the symbolism of the reading theme in earlier Western religious art see Anna Jameson, Legends of the Madonna, ed. by Estelle M. Hurll (Boston, 1895), pp. 35, 125. It was used in nineteenth century American painting by such artists as Julian Alden Weir in The Open Book (1891, Smithsonian Institution) and Winslow Homer in his Portrait of Helena de Kay (ca. 1873, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection). For further discussion of the book and newspaper in nineteenth century American art see catalogue no. 34. Kroll referred to the title of his painting as “Reading on the Rocks,” see Hale and Bowers, p. 79. Kroll’s Two Nudes (ca. 1910, Hale and Bowers, Pl. 80), is his earliest use of this motif. See Catalogue no. 35, for further discussion of the reading figure.

Hale and Bowers, p. 79. Kroll appears to be somewhat mistaken here. According to a letter of July 5, 1978 from the curatorial assistant, Lucy Callihan, the painting was a gift to the museum from the collector John G. Lowe in 1933.

Letter to Carl Weeks, November 6, 1933.


Vanity Fair, 25 (September 1925), p. 8. Also see pp. 20, 23.


Hale and Bowers, p. 81.

Hale and Bowers, p. 81.


Foxhall, p. 1, quoted Kroll as follows: “We have a beautiful world. Let us live together in it in contentment and harmony, and enjoy it. Let us find expression without hysteria. There are so many strange doctrines—of social adjustment, of morals, of politics, and of art, reflecting so many antagonisms. No doubt they are necessary and good as stimulants and tonics. But let us not regard them as the major preoccupations and the major expressions of all life around us. Let us look at our beautiful world and gain comfort and faith from it.” There is something typically American in Kroll’s non-ideological approach to life and art. Yet, at the same time, his own connection to the Academy and love of the Old Masters is in a European tradition.


Kroll’s statement that he “looked at” pornographic pictures might refer to works by Petty and Vargas rather than pornography literally. See below, no. 289.


Francis V. O'Connor, ed., The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs (Washington, D.C., 1972), p. 273. Kroll stated: “In my own life, I don't know—I must be a social minded person, because I was always working for the other artists.” He assumed the presidency of what he termed the “U.S. Committee of the International Association” in order to stop a “perfectly awful man” from taking it. See Hale and Bowers, p. 82. It was headquartered in Paris.

O'Connor, p. 273.

O'Connor, p. 272.

O'Connor, p. 277.

O'Connor, p. 273.

O'Connor, p. 275.

O'Connor, p. 276.

Actually, Kroll's involvement with the MacDowall Plan in the 1930s was foreshadowed by similar activities in 1918. In that year he had met Dr. John Weichsel, founder and President of the People's Art Guild, and briefly associated with this organization which sought to reinstitute the “social function of art.” This goal was to be accomplished by exhibiting artists work away from the auspices of gallery owners and museums. Dr. Weichsel, a member of the Stieglitz group, organized his first large exhibit in 1916 at the Forward Hall. See letter of Kroll to John Weichsel, August 31, 1918, John Weichsel Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, N60-62, pp. 1-3. He apparently had a falling out with Weichsel, who kidded him about his titles [N.A., etc.], according to Kroll in a letter of January 30, 1921.

For Kroll's relationship to Francis H. Taylor see Hale and Bowers, pp. 77-78, 84, 90, 99-100; for an example of Kroll's connection to the Frank Rehn Gallery a leading gallery dealing in American art, see Hale and Bowers, p. 58. Kroll also exhibited at Knoedler Galleries as late as the 1940s and the ACA Galleries founded by Herman Baron in the early 1930s. For further information on Baron see the Henry Schnakenberg Papers, Archives of American Art, roll D113, frames 557, 605.


National Academy of Design, November 5-13, 1910; Chicago Art Institute, “Paintings by Leon Kroll,” December 23, 1924-January 25, 1925; Des Moines Association of Fine Arts, “Exhibition of Paintings by Leon Kroll,” February 6-28, 1925; Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, October 6-27, 1929 are examples.

After 1940 Kroll never was to have a major museum retrospective in his lifetime. The retrospectives he did have were either in commercial galleries or small public museums. Examples of the latter were the Houston retrospective in 1944, Fitchburg Museum, Massachusetts, exhibition in 1958, and Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art retrospective in 1980.


John O’Connor, Jr., “Patrons Fund Purchase,” 201.


See Lea Rossen Delong, Nature’s Forms/Nature’s Forces, p. 120; she quotes the artist Alexandre Hogue as follows: “Some may realize that the plow is a phallic symbol but if they don’t it doesn’t matter. They can still realize that the plow still caused the erosion to begin with and so Mother Earth is raped by the plow and laid bare.”


Letter to Carl Weeks, October 2, 1937.

“Utopian Judge in Mural Resembles Justice Stone,” New York Herald Tribune, (February 25, 1936), pp. 4, 18. Also, “Kroll Gives His Best to the ‘Justice’ Panels in Washington,” The Art Digest, 10 (September 1, 1936), 34; and
O'Connor, pp. 21, 23 (Fig. 3), ff. Belisario R. Contreras observed that “the new idealism of the New Deal was clearly stated in his [Kroll’s] *The Victory of Justice*. It is in a way, a graphic statement of the philosophy of the present administration.” Kroll to Edward B. Rowan, October 29, 1935, quoted in Belisario R. Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1983), p. 115. Kroll called himself a “liberal.” See Hale and Bowers, p. 122. On the other hand, Katherine Schmidt, of the Bacon and Brook group who was a good friend of Kroll’s referred to the Academy as being “screwball right.” “On any appropriation or any government things, always the right. [sic] Right nuts got the jobs.” See Katherine Schmidt, “Interview: Katherine Schmidt Talks With Paul Cummings,” *Archives of American Art Journal*, 17, no. 2 (1977), 20.

247 Hale and Bowers, p. 121.

248 Hale and Bowers, pp. 25, 122.


250 Contreras, p. 19. For a discussion of Bruce’s background, in particular his fondness for Italian Renaissance art and Piero della Francesca, see Contreras, pp. 31-35.

251 Contreras, p. 115.


253 Contreras, p. 18. Also, Bruce saw New Deal art programs not as a means for transforming society but only buildings. Art was not propaganda in his estimation. Kroll also had similar views about the nature of art. Richard D. McKinzie for example observed that Bruce asked George Biddle to “paint the happy family liberated through justice in his mural much happier than in his sketches,” and Henry Varnum Poor to depict the Bureau of Prisons more as a place of social readjustment than punishment, and Kroll to remove the doves in his *Victory of Justice* and replace them with clouds. See Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, N.J., 1973), p. 61.

254 Park and Markowitz, p. 142.

255 Conversation with the writer, June 15, 1989.

256 It was preceded by a smaller version containing only two figures which
is in the Delaware Art Museum, catalog no. 38-134; 28 1/2 x 18”.

257 "Leon Kroll and His Painting," Carnegie Magazine, 10 (December 1936), 219. Alexander Eliot sees the meaning of the reclining man consisting of his suffering from “heatstroke.” See Alexander Eliot, Three Hundred Years of American Painting, intro. by John Walker (New York, 1957), p. 221. Kroll’s use of the reclining male figure in the foreground with his face in the earth surrounded by several figures was also used by Balthus (1908- ) in The Mountain (1937, Metropolitan Museum), with a similar effect of ambiguity of meaning. Although Balthus and Kroll did not know each other, nor does Kroll mention him in his Memoirs, their work shows several parallels especially in the 1940s which will be discussed later.

258 "Leon Kroll and His Painting," Carnegie Magazine, 10 (December 1936), 219.

259 See Pincus-Witten, p. 78. Also Hale and Bowers, p. 32, for Kroll’s own feeling of embarrassment.

260 For an illustration of Bonnard’s entry entitled Breakfast Table see Homer St. Gaudens, “Pictures and Picture Frames,” Carnegie Magazine, 10 (October 1936), 134. The painting is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Jaffe, New York. The American artist, Guy Pène du Bois was another juror whose figures were also not very painterly but rather metallic in appearance.


262 Hale and Bowers, p. 18. Kroll is not specific when “later” was.


made the puzzling statement that he painted fifteen murals in public places. Where
these are located is difficult to say as the Washington, Worcester, Johns Hopkins
and Omaha Beach murals collectively total nine (counting the Johns Hopkins mu­
rals as five separate panels.) See Hale and Bowers, p. 46.

265 Hale and Bowers, p. 84.


268 Dungan, n.p.

269 Dungan, n.p.

270 Dungan, n.p.

271 The exhibit ran from January 10 through February 12, 1940 and in­
cluded works by Benton, Dali, DeChirico, Noguchi, Maillol, O'Keefe, Manship,
Curry, Dufy, Derain, Leger, Laurencin, Tchelitchew and others, besides Matisse
and Kroll. For an illustration of Kroll's piece see Sara Sturgeon Small, "Future
Heirlooms in 1940 Glass," Arts and Decoration, 51 (March 1940), 14. For an
illustration of Matisse's vase see John Russell, The World of Matisse: 1869-1954
(New York 1969), p. 146. For a specific reference to the exhibition and Kroll
see Twenty-Seven Contemporary Artists, Sam Lewisohn, Foreword, Frank Jew­
ett Mather, Jr., Preface, John M. Gates "Nature of the Collection," (New York,
Steuben Glass Company, 1940), no. 16. The piece is presently at the Lillian


274 Hale and Bowers, p. 88.

275 Forbes Watson Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, D56, frames 212-

276 Hale and Bowers, p. 91.

278 Letter to Carl Weeks, January 1, 1942.


280 Cat. no. 78-578. Published by Abbot Laboratories as a contribution to the Treasury’s Schools-at-War Program. See *Oral History*, pl. 119 for a reproduction.


282 Catalogue of an Exhibition, *Paintings and Drawings* by Leon Kroll (Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, December 3-17, 1944), 3 pp.


285 Publication no. 23, 1945, *The Cleveland Print Club*.


287 Alberto Vargas and Reid Austin, *Vargas*, foreword by Hugh Hefner (New York, 1978), p. 31. Kroll’s Monique was also seen to evince a “reflective mood” by an earlier writer. See Norman Kent, ed., *Drawings by American Artists* (New York, 1947), fig. 90.

288 Vargas and Austin, p. 31.
289 Hale and Bowers, p. 114. See no. 221.

290 Vargas and Austin, pp. 31, 38.

291 “Kroll Advises,” The Art Digest, 6 (April 15, 1932), 25.


294 Nicholson, p. 15.

295 Nicholson, p. 15.


297 Carol Duncan, “Virility and Domination in Early 20th Century Vanguard Painting,” Artforum, 12 (December 1973), 34. Many of Kroll’s finest female portraits only use the first name of the sitter. See Antiques, 135, no. 5 (May 1989), 1111. The subject here is upper middle-class. See Catalogue no. 21 for further discussion of Kroll’s use of first names alone. In fact, as Gill Saunders has shown, the denigration of the female form is commonly seen in avant garde painting. He quotes de Kooning as saying: “I thought I might as well stick to the idea that it’s got two eyes, a mouth and a neck.” (Note his casual denigration of the female body as an object, as ‘it.’) According to Saunders, “the theme of anonymity runs through the tradition of the female nude to the extent that a nude portrait arrests, even affronts. Again and again the male artist reduces the female model to an object, to ‘it.’ As Picasso put it: I try to do a nude as it is. If I do a nude, people ought to think: It’s a nude not Madame Whatsit.” Quoted in Gill Saunders, The Nude: A New Perspective (London, 1989), p. 74.

298 Hale and Bowers, p. 75.

299 Jo Gibbs, “Kroll Holds First Show in a Decade,” Art Digest, 21 (January 1, 1947), 16.

300 “Leon Kroll,” Art News, 45 (Feb. 1947), 51. For an illustration of one “unfinished” work advertising his French & Co. show see The Art Digest, 21
(January 1, 1947), 20. This does not appear to be a preliminary study for another, later version of the subject. The title of this painting is Head of Marie-Claude, (1945, Kroll Estate). Kroll, in his Memoirs writes that “This is incomplete. Its the same with that nude over there. It’s something very nice. Sometimes when I have no more to say I just don’t say it. There’s no point in unattractively finishing a picture.” See Kroll, Oral History, p. 256, Pl. 155. On the other hand, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art had two works which are preliminary studies for later works. The first is a study for Summer, New York, n.d., o/c, 19 1/4 x 23 1/2”. The second is Study for ‘Girl in Brown,’ 1938, o/c; 27 3/4 x 17 1/2”. The later work, de-accessioned, March 1, 1979, is signed. This painting is quite similar in feeling to the head study advertising Kroll’s French & Co. exhibition in the above magazine. The artist placed a dark shape around the figure at varying distances to the canvas edge resulting in an abstract two-dimensional shape contrasting with the white areas of the canvas left unpainted. The head, or figure, within the shape is painted quite loosely with lines contrasting with the surrounding shape forming a pleasing pattern. The issue of the sketch versus the finished painting previously mentioned in the reference to Jean-Paul Laurens was an important issue in the work of his teacher. See no. 30.


304 Gibbs, p. 13. For a reference to Kroll’s position as being independent at this time see Sacartoff, 115.

305 See Berman and Wechsler, p. 247, no. 272 for a discussion of the brushy and painterly facture in Girl on a Balcony.

306 For a reference to the importance of figural variety in academic theory, see Sir Joshua Reynolds, Kt., Discourses, intro. by Roger Fry (London, 1905), p. 240, for his ideas on the poses of figures. For his references to The Graces Adorning a Term of Hymen, where “three plump society ladies indefinitely halted in a sequence of classical ballet,” …in which the subject “affords sufficient employment to the figures, …and gives an opportunity of introducing a variety of graceful historical attitudes, …” see Derek Hudson, Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Personal Study (London, 1958), p. 124. Hale and Bowers, p. 83.
See no. 257 for an earlier reference to the thematic relationship of Balthus and Kroll. In the previous example the prone figure was equated with ambiguity. Here the meaning is concerned with sexual arousal.


Hale and Bowers, p. 76.

Hale and Bowers, p. 76.

Hale and Bowers, pp. 76-77.

Gabor, pp. 69, 84.


See Leon Kroll, “National Academy School,” *National Academy Bulletin*, no. 3 (November 1937), pp. 6-7. He stated that “the students had to go through a very thorough course of drawing, and learn to really draw from nature. They
had to make a very good drawing from the antique before they could get into life class." See Hale and Bowers, p. 77. But he also stated: "It is obvious that good craftsmanship alone will not produce works of art, but it is infinitely preferable in works of art than the lack of it. What he does with it later is dependent upon what God or nature—or both, have given him." See National Academy Bulletin, (November 1937), p. 7.


324 Soyer, p. 227.

325 Soyer, p. 227.

326 Soyer, p. 227.


328 Henry Schnakenberg Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, D113, frame 291.

329 Park and Markowitz, p. 58, figs. 35-36, p. 88, fig. 72.

330 Irving Leibowitz, "Are These Statehouse Senate Murals Red Tainted, or are They as Bad as Some Hoosiers Paint Them?" The Indianapolis Times, (May 10, 1953), p. 4.

331 Hale and Bowers, p. 93.

332 Congressional Record—House of Representatives, (March 25, 1949), pp. 3297-3298. Also see "Henry Schnakenberg Papers," Archives of American Art, roll D113, frame 0557. See Congressional Record House of Representatives, (May 17, 1949), p. 6487 for further organizations. He was also a member of the National Association of Mural Painters and the Artists Front to Win the War. For the latter group see the Henry Schnakenberg Papers, roll D113, frame 0557. Kroll never stated that he was a Director of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.
Letter of Henry Schnakenberg to (?) Williams, February 18, 1956, Henry Schnakenberg Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, D113, frames 603-05. In referring to the Dallas Museum Exhibition Schnakenberg says: “All four of the artists have been friends of mine for many years; Kroll a very good friend as was Kuniyoshi up to the time of his death; Shahn and Zorach friends to a lesser degree. Of course I have known, as has everyone else (they never made any secret of it), their interest in various phases of Communism but countless other thinking people have done the same. None of them had the least idea of doing anything to hurt this country even if it had been in their power to do so, which it was not.” This was possibly written to Wheeler Williams who Kroll wrote was a member of the Academy and was “a reactionary sculptor who was gunning for me.” He also referred to Williams as a racist and anti-semitic. See Kroll, Oral History, p. 224.
Hale and Bowers, p. 95. Nor was he to receive the public acknowledgment in the United States upon the completion of his work that the city of Worcester had accorded him in 1941 during the war. Perhaps the lack of publicity and official appreciation was due in part to the location of the mural abroad. Kroll remarked that he didn’t go over for the dedication two years after the completion of the mosaic, and that no one ever sees it except the “mothers of the poor devils who were killed there.” See Hale and Bowers, pp. 96-97.

Hale and Bowers, p. 94. The artist remarked that for his sky he used “every kind of color in there, not only blue but also red, yellow-green, purples; but the predominant tonality is blue and it scintillates. It’s simply stunning in the effect of shimmering light—it just sparkles. If I’d made it all blue tones it would have looked like just a blue wall, and it wouldn’t have been good. This way it’s a living sky.” Kroll referred to it as having “broken color” and being like a pointillist picture. See Hale and Bowers, p. 96. Also the Guide to the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial (The American Battle Monuments Commission, 1984), p. 17.

Baltimore News Letter, (October 15, 1954), n.p. The will mentions ten women, but the article uses Mrs. Clews married and maiden names.

The will stated that the trustees must commission “the best muralist in the country.” See Hale and Bowers, p. 97.

Baltimore News Letter, (October 15, 1954), n.p. See also Linda Nochlin, “Visions of Languor,” House and Garden, 155 (April 1983), 125, in which she compares the fin de siècle notion of respose to the concepts associated with luxe, calme, and volupté. Also see nos. 151-152 above for the relationship of Matisse and Kroll.


Hale and Bowers, p. 49. Marie-Claude, in a conversation with the writer of June 15, 1989, remarked that the Manships in the 1940s were also fond of lavish parties.


Hale and Bowers, p. 98.

See “Barrister and the Beauties on Johns Hopkins Mural,” Time Magazine, 68 (November 26, 1956), 86. Another reference was in the Baltimore News Letter, February 15, 1957 and is vague. Also, “10 Beauties to be Painted,” The Sun, Baltimore, (October 6, 1954), n.p. This article deals with the entire commission.

Hale and Bowers, p. 98.

Hale and Bowers, p. 98.


John McAndrew, “The Perils of Pompier,” The Art Digest, 28 (March 1, 1954), 7-9. Also in a letter by Kroll to Jerome Myers of June 15, 1940 in response to Meyers’s reference to Kroll as an “academician” the latter wrote: “You are very kind about me. Calling me an academician was I am sure, done in a friendly spirit, though the term is anathema in certain quarters, as you know.” See Jerome Myers Papers, Archives of American Art, roll, N68-7, frame 536.

Hale and Bowers, p. 47. Speicher did not die until 1962 and Hopper died in 1967, about five and ten years after Kroll’s Memoirs were recorded.

See Hale and Bowers, pp. xix, xx. However, Kroll’s comment regarding abstract painting’s popularity suggests some disquiet: “For the moment my sort of painting—and I think it’s just for the moment—is not quite the fashion. The abstract babies are still on deck, you know. But that kind of thing will get to be such a God-damned bore.” See Hale and Bowers, p. 99. Also see Gruen, p. 46.


Grosser, p. 262. Kroll included an unfinished work in the show as he did in the 1947 Milch and French & Co. exhibitions. Again, the question arises as to why Kroll decided in 1947 to include unfinished works in his exhibitions, especially as he was an artist whose work was characterized by careful finish. In any case it was only this large "unfinished" nude entitled Reflections (catalogue no. 32) that received favorable comment by Grosser among the recent works. Whether Kroll in his own mind regarded it as finished is clear based on his above comment on the Portrait of Marie-Claude. In his Memoirs he implied that it was painted at Mt. Kisco, New York, where he lived in 1942 after leaving Worcester. At the time of his Memoirs in 1956 he stated that he was "just now starting to repaint the background of it." Oral History, p. 203. But it evidently had not been repainted by the time of the Milch Gallery exhibition in 1959, nor had it been changed by the time of his San Antonio show in 1960 or his centennial exhibition in 1984 at the ACA Gallery. So the evidence suggests that Kroll was unable to complete it and in fact exhibited it in an apparently unfinished state for at least the last twenty-six years of his life.

Grosser, p. 262.

"Exhibition of Kroll at Milch," Art News, 58 (March 1959), 11.


Dynamic Symmetry, no. 107, n.p.

Although its location is unknown, these observations are based on a color transparency kindly provided by Kroll's former dealer at ACA Gallery, Laurence Casper. A similar development toward more intense color can be found in the very late work of Kroll's contemporary, John Sloan when this artist was in his 70s. Lloyd Goodrich referred to this development as a "new blossoming." See Lloyd Goodrich, John Sloan (New York, 1952), p. 74.

Gruen, p. 46.


The Rediscovered Years: Leon Kroll, intro. by Benard Danenberg (Bernard Danenberg Galleries, New York, November 10-28, 1970), p. 2. For a review of this show see Janet Hobhouse, "Leon Kroll," Arts Magazine, 45 (November 1970), 64. She called attention to "a sense of peace and simple and provincial harmony with an articulate expression of his sense of wonder in the colors and moving masses of city or country scenes."

According to Bruce St. John, Sloan's later work was regarded similarly. In St. John's estimation, "The critics always showed more interest in, and respect for, Sloan's early work. It sometimes annoyed him [Sloan] that the later work in Gloucester and Santa Fe was not taken seriously." See St. John, John Sloan, p. 50. Milton Brown, writing in 1952, is especially critical of Sloan's later work: "It is, rather, an abortive career, including an early efflorescence which is cut short in its prime. Though the last thirty years of Sloan's life saw little abatement of activity, his work of those years had little to do with the expanding tradition of modernism in America. His is the tragic case of an artist who had outlived his time of creativity, doomed even in life to be remembered for an earlier period of felicity." See Milton Brown, "The Two John Sloans," Art News, 50 (January 1952), 26. Another view of Sloan's later work is expressed by Lloyd Goodrich, also writing in 1952. In commenting on Sloan's nudes specifically, Goodrich wrote that "these works convince one that they will stand up as the years pass; they have the kind of solid existence that all lasting art has." See Goodrich, John Sloan, p. 65.

This information was conveyed by Viette Kroll to me in a conversation in November, 1978, and by Marie-Claude Rose on June 15, 1989.

Conversation with the author, July, 1980.


See for example Patricia Hills and Roberta Tarbell, The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1980), pp. 73-
THE LIFE AND WORK OF LEON KROLL
WITH A CATALOGUE OF HIS NUDES

Volume II

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

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The Ohio State University
1993

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3 Catalogue

The catalogue is arranged chronologically. Works not previously dated are placed on the basis of their formal or thematic relationship to securely dated paintings. However, some of the dates are approximate. The dimensions of the works are given in inches. Height precedes width. The catalogue also discusses the artworks included, though it is not, as I have stated, a catalogue raisonné. The reader is referred to the Introduction for a further discussion of the catalogue.

CATALOGUE 1 (Figure 57)

Male Nude
Charcoal on white paper
ca. 1907; 24½ x 18¾"
Signed lower right recto: "Leon Kroll"
Owner: The National Academy of Design, New York City
Exhibitions: Received the Bronze Medal for the Day Life Class in 1907 at the academy of Design, New York City.

Male Nude is a very detailed rendering of a male in a standing pose reflecting the principle of contrapposto. The model’s right arm is bent at the elbow with the hand at the waist. The left arm is relaxed and hangs at the side repeating the strong vertical of the weight-bearing leg, which is tense and straight. The other leg is forward and relaxed, creating a tilt of the hips and shoulders. The head is turned sharply to its right and is seen in profile in contrast to the
body, which is almost frontal. Although the pose reflects the tradition of Greek sculpture from the classical period in its balance of opposites, the realism of the body and face shows a strong relationship to realist drawings, such as those of Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy. This is seen in the way Kroll has taken great care in the modeling of the idiosyncratic surfaces and contours of the body and also in the fact that the face is that of a specific individual who is rather young with a thick head of hair. It is also seen in the way that the pose appears to be unselfconscious. But even in such a youthful work as this student drawing, Kroll showed himself to be a superb organizer of his composition. As in Eakins' *Nude Woman Seated, Wearing a Mask* (ca. 1876), Kroll used value contrasts to create a path of vision both inside and outside the body. This is achieved in the way the jaw, because of its darkness, moves the viewer's eyes to the bent arm which in turn carries the eye back into the dark pubic area and finally down the tense leg by means of the strong shadow. The negative space on the left repeats the shape of the head and also introduces the larger open space between the model's legs. Prophetically, the style of *Male Nude* as described is closely analogous to the style of Jean-Paul Laurens, the academician with whom Kroll was to study in Paris two years later. This drawing, in its commanding realism, does not give evidence of the idealizing tendencies of some of Kroll's later interpretations of the female nude. Kroll's work will fluctuate between these two tendencies throughout his career.
CATALOGUE 2 (Figure 58)

A Nude
Pastel on paper
c. 1908-09; Dimensions unknown
Unsigned (?)
Owner: Unknown
Exhibition: Art Club of Philadelphia, Eighteenth Annual Exhibition, December 1915 (?).

This drawing, probably the earliest work by Kroll ever to be reproduced, is quite different from the previous example in subject and pose. A young girl is shown reclining with one leg crossed over the other above the knee. She holds a flower in her hands. The artist has placed the girl's body so that the viewer is able to see the genital area in a pose recalling Courbet's Woman with White Stockings of 1861 in the Barnes Foundation. Also contributing to the erotic quality of this work is the inclusion of the flower, a motif used earlier by Edouard Manet, among others, in conjunction with a nude. Here, however, the nude holds the long-stemmed flower near her mouth rather than wearing it or having it offered by a second person. Ancillary objects symbolic of fertility in nature such as flowers or fruit were used by Kroll throughout his career. This is probably his first use of such a motif. Eroticism, seen here for the first time in Kroll's work, will remain an aspect of the artist's work in his later career. As in the previous drawing, there is no hint of any idealizing of form on the part of the artist. The legs and rest of the body are somewhat bony in appearance. The reference to the artist as "A. Leon
Kroll" by the reviewer of the exhibition in which this drawing appeared suggests an early date for the drawing, well before the actual date of the review. Why Kroll would enter this work as late as 1915 when he had much later paintings of nudes to choose from remains a mystery. A drawing by Arthur B. Davies which was in the Armory Show of 1913 is similar to the Kroll drawing in its pose and attendant eroticism with the crossing of the model's legs (at the ankles) and the dress drawn up above the hips. It is in a more profile arrangement however. Whether this could be contemporary to the Kroll drawing or whether it was known by Kroll is uncertain.

CATALOGUE 3 (Figure 59)

Two Nudes
Oil on canvas
c. 1910; Dimensions unknown
Not signed or dated
Owner: unknown
Exhibitions: unknown

This painting, dated c. 1910 by Hale and Bowers, is probably one of the first by Kroll to include multiple nudes with a still life of fruit, along with the knife and book motifs. Although nudes with attendant figures can be found in the nineteenth century (Manet's Olympia, 1863) and earlier, quite often the attendant figure is clothed. In the equal emphasis that Kroll places on both women one is reminded of Gustave Courbet's Sleep (1866, Musée du Petit-Palais). Like the Courbet painting, Kroll's picture also shows the two nudes physically interacting.
One nude holds the hair of the other. In her other hand she holds a book, making this the earliest use of the reading theme within Kroll's oeuvre. In his juxtaposition of the fruit of the still life with the rounded forms of the nudes' bodies, the artist emphasizes the similarities of these forms within nature. Another artist who was involved with the subject of double nudes in the first years of the twentieth century was Pablo Picasso. In late 1906 Picasso did a series of drawings showing two nudes in various relationships to each other. These included a nude standing over a reclining nude, a standing and seated nude, and finally two standing nudes. The latter culminated in his proto-cubist painting Two Nudes of that year (G. David Thompson Collection, Pittsburgh). But in none of these works do the nudes interact physically. Another related work by Picasso from the same year showing a concern with feminine narcissism and vanity is El peinado (1906, Metropolitan Museum, New York). In this painting one seated woman looks into a hand-held mirror while another standing woman braids her hair. I do not know whether Kroll was aware that Picasso's early work addressed subjects similar to his own, but it is certain that the motif of the mirror in conjunction with the nude remains important in avant-garde art, as witnessed by Ferdinand Leger's Woman with a Mirror (1920, Moderna Museet, Stockholm) and Picasso's Young Girl Before the Mirror (1932, Moma) as well as in Kroll's later nudes of the 1930s.
CATALOGUE 4 (Figure 60)

Red Head, Semi-Nude
1911; 32x26"
Not signed or dated (?)
Owner: unknown
Provenance: unknown
Exhibitions: unknown

Kroll stated in his Memoirs that he painted three or four redheads at this time. Again, the features are quite specific, as is the body of the young model. Her hair is long and falls over her right shoulder repeating the verticals of the picture frame to her left and of her arms. Her hair also covers most of her forehead, while her lips are full—almost identical in shape to the lemon in the still life painting on the wall. The nose is short and upturned somewhat. Her body is thin and even a little angular compared to the more Rubenesque nudes in the previous example. There is nothing stylized about this nude and this model will reappear in other examples during these years. She confronts the viewer directly with her gaze, in the spirit of self-confidence characteristic of that period in America. The brush strokes are rapid and broken, indicating the influence of Robert Henri and his followers. On the right, the artist emphasized the vertical of the picture frame on the wall by lightening its value; at the same time he very nicely varies the verticals made by the frame, arms, and hair by curving the model’s left arm slightly. The still life picture on the wall depicts lemons and oranges, the shapes of which repeat the forms of the small breasts of the model.
The tradition of associating the female body with fruit reaches its most aggressive in Tom Wesselman's (1931- ) Great American Nude 56 of 1964. In this painting Wesselman has placed a grotesque smile on his reclining nude which suggests the “mindlessness of the pinup” as well as “invitation” and “ecstasy.” The absent eyes, the jar of anemones (with their strongly defined stamens), and the roses which are placed half way between the breasts and pubic area suggest a crude “sexual symbolism,” according to Saunders. It is in Wesselman's placement of two oranges in close proximity to the breasts and his commodification of the female body that he can be most clearly related to Kroll. Taken together, the blank face, smile, flowers and fruit reduce woman "to a sexual object, a site of oral gratification, a consumer commodity," in Saunders's view. Kroll's Red Head-Semi Nude, although related in theme to the Wesselman, is not as dehumanized, nor does she suggest the "mindlessness of the pinup." In what appears to be a very spontaneously conceived composition, Kroll shows himself to be sensitive in relating the figure to its environment. In this respect, Kroll is almost unique at this time within the Henri Circle.

CATALOGUE 5 (Figure 61)
Red Head, Torso
Oil on canvas, transferred to board
c. 1912; 32x26"
Owners: Walter and Arlene Deitch, New York
Exhibitions: unknown
Reference: Hale and Bowers, 1983, pl. 82
A semi-nude based on the model in catalogue no. 4 is the subject of this painting. Here, the model is shown standing with her blouse lowered to her waist revealing her breasts. She looks down and towards her left arm which she seems to be lifting through an opening in the blouse. This painting is characterized by the fluid brush strokes and painterly treatment also seen in the work of John Sloan and George Bellows in the first years of the century. The figure is realistically depicted, with no attempt at idealizing either the face or the body. The color scheme is monochromatic with a preponderance of browns, ochres and umbers; only the few touches of blue in the background provide a coloristic tension. Kroll here shows an indebtedness to the dark palette of Henri.

CATALOGUE 6 (Figure 62)
Nude in a Landscape
Oil on canvas
ca. 1918; 48\frac{1}{4} x 31"
Signed and dated lower right: “Kroll 1918”
Owner: Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa
Exhibitions: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, Paintings by Leon Kroll, October 6-27, 1929.
References: International Studio, 89 (February 1921), 37; Paintings by Leon Kroll (Buffalo: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, 1929), brochure no. 12; Hale and Bowers, 1983, pl. 84.

This painting has at times been known as “Nude Girl Combing Her Hair,” and, in the earliest reference, “Blind Girl Combing her Hair.” It is one of several paintings Kroll executed at this time depicting the nude outdoors. The subject is completely nude and is seated on a rock facing the viewer. One arm is raised
as she combs her long hair. In the background are some hills and rocks. The transition between the large rock on which the girl is seated and the background is ambiguous, suggesting that this area was not painted from nature. The use of the palette knife technique is apparent in the right foreground, as in some of Courbet's landscapes with figures. It is known that Kroll owned a small landscape by Courbet. In general, the foreground and middle distance are more ambiguous than the background. The latter is painted more three-dimensionally. In contrast to the palette knife technique used on the rock in the right foreground, the body has been evenly modeled. In terms of color, he again uses the dark palette with the sky providing a blue note against the browns and ochres of the rocks.

The significance of this work in Kroll's oeuvre is two-fold. First, it reflects the artist's continued fascination with the handling and, here, combing of long hair first seen in Two Nudes of 1910. The combing of long hair was a subject that Kroll interpreted in a series of indoor clothed figures beginning ca. 1917. The theme of self-beautification was to continue into the 1930s. Second, this painting is important as it shows that Kroll was beginning to act on the advice given him by Winslow Homer who he had met at Prout's Neck, Maine, in 1907. At that time, according to Kroll's Memoirs, the aged artist told him to "do figures and leave rocks for your old age as they are easy." Kroll, in this painting, combines both subjects. But in his later works he creates a more complete formal unity between
the rocks and the nude in paintings which are related to Homer's own idealization of woman.¹⁶

CATALOGUE 7 (Figure 63)

Nude Seated on a Bed
Oil on canvas
1919; 48x36"
Signed and dated lower right: "Leon Kroll 1919"
Owner: Stuart Pivar
Provenance: unknown

This nude is similar to no. 6 above with three exceptions. Her right arm, instead of being raised and combing her hair, is down and reaching across her body. Second, the subject is indoors. Finally, the technique is more uniform throughout, as it lacks the use of the palette knife. The model is painted quite realistically with a strong sense of modeling which conveys a three-dimensionality of form. Her facial features are quite realistic and not idealized. The face, shown in a three-quarter view, has a pertness and vivacity that is part of the appeal of the work. She has wide cheek bones, thick eyebrows, full lips, and long hair which falls behind her shoulders. Compositionally, the diagonal of the body is balanced by the two verticals of the bed sheet in the foreground and the hanging clothing in the background. These verticals are in turn balanced by the two horizontals of the headboard and the white sheet in the foreground. The diagonal arm connects the upper left side of the composition with the lower right where the white sheet carries the eye to the feet and legs of the model; the pleasing contour of the hip begins the journey
once again. Perhaps if the vertical sheet did not divide the foreground area into halves, the composition would have been even more satisfying. Also puzzling is the treatment of the anatomy around the base of the neck. The sterno-mastoid muscle appears to be too long on the right. Independent diagonal brush strokes are faintly visible in the stomach area. Other than the subject, there is little here that says this is a product of the National Academy of Design or that it is academic. According to Janet Fink, “two kinds of subjects used to whet the discipline of academic technique have been the nude and, especially since the nineteenth century, still-life arrangements. Neither has any direct relationship to the normal public preoccupations of society, and yet both have provided a seemingly unending framework for artistic expression.”17 She further observed that figure painting of the academy “might range from the elegant nudes of Leon Kroll or the mythological evocations of Eugene Savage to the rugged workingmen of Frank Cohen Kirk and the sweaty humanity of Reginald Marsh.”18 Kroll’s Nude Seated on a Bed can be related neither to Kirk, Savage or Marsh except for the craftsmanship displayed. As Edwin Blashfield observed, “Craftsmanship born of intensive, disciplined study is the supreme gift of an Academy.”19
CATALOGUE 8 (Figure 64)

Portrait of a Nude
Oil on canvas, relined
1920; 24x20"
Signed and dated upper right: “Leon Kroll 1920”
Owner: Private collection
Provenance: Pierce Galleries, Inc., Hingham, MA
Exhibitions: unknown
Reference: unknown

This is a half-length portrait of head, shoulders, breasts and arms. The model holds a portion of her clothing with her left hand. She is characterized by large rounded shoulders, rounded, heart-shaped lips, and short hair. The composition is based on the triangle, with her arms forming the base and sides and her small head its apex. The background, consisting of two pieces of green drapery on either side of the figure, is painted very loosely with bold strokes in contrast to the tightly modeled figure. The wall between the drapes is painted very loosely also with strokes of gray superimposed on the reddish orange wall. Although young and attractive in a Rubenesque way, the face has none of the elegant, stylized quality seen in some of Kroll’s heads beginning in the mid-1920s. This painting does not appear to be a class demonstration or unfinished sketch. Instead, it strikingly parallels not only in subject but color scheme the painting by Manet entitled The Blonde with Bare Breasts (1878, Louvre). As Pierre Courthion wrote in regard to the Manet: “The flesh tints are magnificent. The pearl glow of the skin has been admirably set off by the pale green background.”20 Kroll’s color scheme
is quite similar but the greens in the Kroll are limited to the background curtains, while the wall contains the reddish tints used only for the accents of flowers in the hat, lips, ear lobe and nipples in the Manet. Finally, in both paintings, the backgrounds are more loosely painted than the body—this is especially true in Kroll’s work.

CATALOGUE 9 (Figure 65)
Seated Nude
Oil on canvas
c.a. 1920-23; 32x26"
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Gordon F. Lupien, M.D., Boston, MA
Provenance: Pierce Galleries, Inc., Hingham, MA
Exhibitions: unknown
Reference: unknown

This painting appears to be based on the same model as the previous entry, but here the format is a seated three-quarter length nude with a reddish drape over the left thigh. The painting is unique in Kroll’s oeuvre thus far because of the very sketchy facture throughout. The brush strokes, although quickly applied are parallel to each other and are not of the loaded type seen in entry no. 6. Kroll appears to be content to let the individual strokes and the irregular shapes they form act as a design element resulting in abstract patterns. Within the form of the body itself, the shadows are made up of long parallel strokes which were only faintly visible in nos. 6-7. Here they are much more emphatic. The palette is based on the colors blue, red-violet, and red. The background is bluish on the
right and violet on the left and very ambiguous spatially. The simplification of form
and more arbitrary color scheme suggests the assimilation of sources like Renoir
and Paul Cézanne. One is reminded of the late work of Renoir also by the large,
rounded forms which Kroll uses.  

CATALOGUE 10 (Figure 66)

Standing Nude
Oil on canvas (paper)?
ca. 1920-25; 18x16"
Signed lower right: "Leon Kroll"
Owner: unknown
Provenance: Marine Arts Gallery, Salem, MA
Exhibitions: unknown
Reference: Antiques, 119 (May 1981), 970

This painting, in its painterliness and spontaneity of execution, appears
to be a sketch rather than a finished work. Again, however, the fact that it is
signed suggests that the artist regarded it as a completed statement. The present
example was never reproduced before 1981 to my knowledge, although it probably
dates from the early 1920s, a date which seems reasonable based on the presence
of short parallel strokes in the figure which can be found in other nudes from the
early 1920s. The nude is shown stepping into a stream with her arms out at her
sides balancing her forward motion in a very graceful manner. There is an idyllic
quality in the subject as well as the overall mood of reverie reminiscent of Arthur
B. Davies’ nymphs.  
The idyllic mood is partially due to the analogous color with
its great use of yellow, green, blue green and violet. The nude is shown full front
in a pose that is quite revealing yet a feeling of innocence dominates because of the facial expression.

In comparing Kroll’s painting to a nude by Robert Henri such as Figure in Motion of 1913, one sees that the latter, although like Kroll’s work showing a concern for graceful motion, does not integrate the figure with the environment. The composition in the Henri is based on the relationship of the figure to the negative spaces of the canvas. In Kroll’s example, the young girl’s body relates to the strong vertical of the tree trunk immediately behind her as well as to the thinner saplings to the left and right. The extended arms of the figure repeat the horizontal branch on the right and extend a variation of this pattern to the left creating a grid-like composition.

CATALOGUE 11 (Figure 67)

Nude, Bearsville
Oil on canvas
ca. 1918-21; 26\(\frac{1}{8}\) x 48"
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Leon Kroll Estate
Provenance: unknown
Reference: Hale and Bowers, 1983, pl. 86

This is one of Kroll’s most unusual paintings of the nude because of the strange pose. Especially intriguing is the way the artist has positioned the hands over the eyes. Sleeping nudes are common in European painting but reclining nudes with their eyes covered by their hands are much more infrequent. The right arm, bent at the elbow, is held away from the body and forms a triangular shape
which is repeated by two large trees in the center background. This triangle is also continued by the lines of the legs and a smaller triangle is made by the enclosed negative space of the right arm. The brush work is again quite loose and similar to the long parallel strokes seen in Seated Nude of ca. 1920-23 (no. 9). It would thus appear that no. 9 cannot be considered a class study on the basis of its brushwork alone. The background and foreground areas comprising the grass and trees are characterized by an even more painterly brush treatment. The painting of the foot (as were the hands in no. 9) is very undefined, perhaps indicating the effects of atmospheric perspective. The most puzzling aspect of Nude, Bearsville remains, however, the covering of the eyes. Perhaps the explanation for this pose is simply that Kroll was entirely interested in the formal solution provided by the triangular shape made by the arms in this position rather than in any symbolic or literal meanings.

CATALOGUE 12 (Figure 68)
The Nude in the Armchair
Oil on canvas
1921; 12x16"
Signed and dated lower left: “Leon Kroll 1921”
Owner: Private collection
Provenance: Dr. Julius Lempert, ca. 1921, Bernard & S. Dean Levy Gallery, Inc., New York, 1975
Exhibitions: unknown
Reference: unknown

This charming little canvas, received from Kroll by Dr. Lempert in lieu of payment, has never been reproduced in the Kroll literature to my knowledge.
Stylistically, it appears to fall somewhere between Catalogue no. 9 Seated Nude of 1920-23 and the more soigné Nude Dorothy of 1925 (no. 15). And, like Nude, Bears­ville (Catalogue no. 11), it continues the sleeping theme with which Kroll dealt extensively in the 1920s, as seen for example in his securely dated Sleep, Central Park (1922, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.). But the latter work is a landscape with clothed figures. The Nude in the Armchair does not have the independent strokes emphasized as much as in Seated Nude, although the use of parallel strokes can be seen especially in the background bed. In the present example the strokes blend together more, creating a more uniform surface than in Seated Nude (no. 9). However, the paint has still been put down with great fluidity, which is quite enjoyable.

In this painting the nude is stretched out in a chair asleep. Her shod feet are resting on a footstool in the lower right corner. Her head has slumped to her left as she dozes, creating an unusual contour shape. In some places the artist used a line to define and separate the contour of the figure from its surroundings, while in others such as in the neck, Kroll allowed the shape of the form to contrast with the chair by means of tone. The peaceful mood is enhanced by the shadow covering the face.
CATALOGUE 13 (Figure 69)
Sleeping Nude in an Interior
Oil on canvas
ca. 1923-25; 26x32"
Signed lower left: "Leon Kroll"
Owner: Private collection
Exhibitions: unknown

Like The Nude in the Armchair (no. 12), this painting was not reproduced in any of the Kroll literature before 1980. As in Catalogue no. 12, the subject is asleep, but on a bed rather than in a chair. The present example, along with no. 12, indicates a change to a quieter, more introspective subject compared to the extroverted series of red-heads Kroll painted in the previous decade such as Red-Head, Semi-Nude (no. 4) of 1911. 23 Sleeping Nude in an Interior, like The Nude in the Armchair (no. 12), has short parallel strokes which taper to a point, though not as strongly defined as in Nude, Bearsville of 1920-24 (no. 11). The arms in the present example frame the head and one leg overlaps the other, recalling Giorgione's Sleeping Venus of ca. 1506. The room in which the model sleeps contains an arched entry, one side of which ends immediately above the model's pubic area, reminiscent of Titian's Venus of Urbino, ca. 1535. These similarities to earlier masters could be coincidental, but Kroll may have seen these paintings during one of his trips to Europe, or he may have known them in reproduction.
This painting is significant because it is one of the first, if not the very first, to contain the motif of the window, a reference to the outside world.

CATALOGUE 14 (Figure 70)

The Napping Model
Oil on canvas
ca. 1924-25; 15x18"
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Judy Ehrlich, New York
Provenance: Estate of the Artist; sold at auction to anonymous collector, April 4, 1979 at William Doyle Galleries, Inc., New York.
Exhibitions: unknown
References: New Yorker Magazine, LV, no. 6 (March 26, 1979), 123 (reproduction); Catalog, William Doyle Galleries, Inc., New York, April 4, 1979, no. 126 (reproduction).

Here is Kroll at his best. There is no evidence of a reliance on the past in either the composition or the figure; nor is there a concern for assimilating one or another avant-garde influence. Sleeping is natural, and Kroll does not endow the behavior with an art historical lineage. In the Napping Model Kroll shows the tedium of modeling, as the model has dozed off in the midst of her pose.

The paint has been applied so loosely in the areas of the drapery as to suggest use of the palette knife. The eye is led into the picture by the model’s leg on the left and the carpet edge and drapery on the right. The drapery on the back of the couch continues the diagonal of the model’s left leg and provides a directional change compared to the main axis of the body. The forms of the body are round yet individualized. Some faint suggestion of the long parallel strokes seen more clearly in the early 1920s may still be observed. This is especially true of the
drapery and couch. The color is based on the primary hues with the secondary green used in the picture on the wall at the top and repeated in the ribbon-like form at the bottom. But these hues have been grayed and are not used in their full intensity, which contributes to the restfulness of the scene. The Napping Model underscores the insight of those writers who called attention to Kroll's sensitive interpretations and understanding of the female form.

This painting, to my knowledge, has not previously been dated. It seems to be most easily placed in the 1920s, perhaps shortly after Nude, Bearsville (no. 11) of 1920-24. It is still painterly but the long parallel strokes are relatively indistinct, suggesting a transition toward the mode Kroll adopts in Nude, Dorothy (no. 15) of 1925, the artist's first stylized nude.
CATALOGUE 15 (Figure 71)

Nude Dorothy
Oil on canvas
1925; 40x34\(\frac{1}{4}\)"
Signed lower right: “Kroll”
Owner: Private Collection, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

This nude probably marks the first time the artist produced the kind of stylized nude for which he later became either famous or notorious, e.g., in referring to Kroll’s work after 1920, Milton Brown in 1955, called attention to the artist’s “stilted refinement, powdered artificiality and academic formula.” 24 It is primarily in the handling of the face that one senses a change in Kroll’s treatment. The figure is still painted realistically with a frontal view of the torso from the groin up. Parallel strokes in the figure, however, are absent. The nude’s smoothly painted facial features suggest a concern for the “glamour” (“stilted refinement”? ) by which Kroll came to be known. The long aquiline nose, sharply curved jaw, and bow-shaped lips with the lower lip set back from the upper are details that remind one of the Art Deco heads seen in such magazines as Vogue about this time. 25

The model stands in front of a starkly plain Roman round-arched doorway,
as in Sleeping Nude in an Interior (No. 13) of ca. 1923-25, suggesting that both works were painted in the same place. The top of this arch carries the eye of the viewer down to the bottom of the composition, at which point the hands and diagonal drapery carry the eye back up to the arch. The curves of the breasts, nipples, edges of the hair and jawline also echo the dramatic, arched opening. This nude constitutes a landmark in the evolution of Kroll’s style.

CATALOGUE 16 (Figure 72)

Nita, Nude
Oil on canvas
1925; 36x27"
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: The Denver Art Museum
Provenance: Edward and Tullah Hanley; Denver Art Museum, 1974
Exhibitions: unknown
References: Hale and Bowers, 1983, pl. 103.

In a letter to Florence B. Haslett dated July 22, 1971, Kroll wrote that he painted Nita, Nude in 1925, although Hale and Bowers list it as “ca. 1926.”26 It was painted in France, on the Riviera near Monte Carlo. The model was a fourteen year-old girl (brought to Kroll’s studio by her mother), according to the artist.27 Kroll painted her several times, as he felt she was an exceptional model. For this reason, perhaps, the painting does not have the stylized features associated with some of Kroll’s work such as the contemporaneous Nude Dorothy (no. 15). Rather, Kroll has presented a sensitive study of a female nude, stressing the individual qualities of the torso and head (as seen for example in the triangular shape of the
breasts and in the fleshy stomach). The facial features concentrate on a rather square chin and heavy, dark eyebrows.

The composition is again unusual within the tradition of the nude. The angle of the hip is repeated by the left hand; from the latter the eye is brought up to the girl’s head where the curve of the chair and arm bring the eye back down. A secondary path of vision is created by the drapery in the foreground which carries the eye to the raised leg; this in turn connects the leg to the model’s right hand. The loaded brush of the “Henri period” around 1912 has disappeared. Also almost totally gone are the long parallel strokes seen in the early 1920s, though the latter technique may be faintly discerned in the model’s left leg. The model sits in a high-backed chair placed in front of a shuttered window. In this painting, Kroll apparently tries to depict what he sees in front of him without any self-conscious appropriations from other sources.
CATALOGUE 17 (Figure 73)

Nude Lucienne
Oil on canvas
1927, $25\frac{3}{4} \times 42\frac{1}{2}$
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa
Provenance: Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Frankel, ca. 1927; Des Moines Art Center, 1930

The dimensions are mistakenly given as $32 \times 49$ in Hale and Bowers for Nude Lucienne, whereas the museum records the smaller dimensions. This painting was also known as Nude L’Odalisque in Kroll’s Spoken Memoirs. The latter title and the style of the painting reflect the strong influence of Ingres on Kroll at this time, in particular, of the Grande Odalisque (1814, Louvre). Kroll mentioned how much he liked Ingres’ Grande Odalisque in his Memoirs for the year 1927,28 which was about the time several other avant-garde painters, underwent an Ingriste influence, as Melvin P. Lader pointed out in 1978.29

Kroll’s Nude Lucienne reminds one of Ingres, but it is much more than a mere copy. The artist stressed the flat space in which the unmodeled figure reclines,
giving the viewer an arabesque of contours in a pleasing rhythm from right to left. The color, also in the manner of Ingres, shows the various fabrics painted in local colors, mainly browns, ochres and blue, which act as a frame for the whiteness of the flesh and sheet near the center. The brushstrokes are very smooth and unbroken in contrast to several of Kroll’s earlier nudes. Despite the heavy influence of Ingres on the subject and pose, Kroll’s painting does have a personal quality that stamps the painting as his. The handling of the drapery is especially important in this respect in the way it frames the buttocks and torso, heightening the erotic quality of the body by emphasizing this particular area. It was this type of nude that Kroll became preeminently associated with, and was criticized for, by such present day writers as Milton Brown and Robert Pincus-Witten.30

CATALOGUE 18 (Figure 74)
Reclining Nude with City View (Reclining Nude in Interior)
1929, 26x32''
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
Exhibitions: unknown
References: unknown

This painting is probably the first example by Kroll of a nude in an interior with a window through which a city view is shown,31 it thus looks forward to several important paintings, including Zelda (no. 20) of 1930, and Summer, New York (no. 23) of 1931. The city seen through a window, and the window which acts as a
barrier to the outside world, is a topic Kroll had begun to explore earlier in such portraits as Mrs. Douglass (1917, Kroll Estate). A later painting, New York Window from ca. 1923-30, is not successful, in my estimation, because story telling or narrative issues dominate formal considerations. The figures appear to be illustrating ideas outside the painting. But sometimes, as here, Kroll combines the nude with the window motif to achieve resonant formal relationships.

Although his fascination with the complexity and dynamism of the city can be related to Kroll’s earlier connection with the Henri circle and John Sloan in particular, Kroll’s paintings of this kind show the contrast between the studio and the city. Sloan had painted views of the city from his studio window much earlier, but invariably in these, the studio itself is not seen—as, for example, in The City From Greenwich Village (1922, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) or Woman’s Work (1912, Cleveland Museum of Art). The first work by Sloan which closely approximates what Kroll does in Reclining Nude with City View is the former’s Looking Out on Washington Square (1933, Kraushaar Galleries, New York). Sloan earlier in 1918 in his Stein at Studio Window, Sixth Avenue (Kraushaar Galleries, N.Y.) had shown a clothed figure looking out of a window with the city enframed within it. In Nude Resting (1923, Private Collection) he depicted a semi-nude beneath a very small window, but there is almost no concern with the city beyond. Although it is uncertain whether Kroll was the first to com-
bine the motifs of the nude with a view of a city through the studio window, his use of these motifs appears to be more emphatic.

Kroll's Reclining Nude with a City View has curved lines which give his nudes realistic and erotic qualities. The bright red of the chair contrasts with the grays in the rest of the picture but does not disturb the quiet mood of the painting as a whole. The artist's fascination with the window here was due partly to aesthetic considerations, as it afforded him the opportunity of contrasting the geometric man-made forms of the rectangular windows with the curves of the buttocks immediately below. In Reclining Nude with City View Kroll also shows the model reading for the first time in his oeuvre. This painting has not previously been reproduced in the Kroll literature.

CATALOGUE 19 (Figure 75)
Semi-Nude Hilda
Oil on canvas 1929, (repainted 1947); 36x27"
Signed lower right: "Leon Kroll"
Owner: Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach, Fla.
Provenance: Purchased by Ralph H. Norton, June 16, 1930; given to Palm Beach Art League, December 14, 1953
References: Art Digest, 23 (November 15, 1948, 19; Academic Undertow (Norton Gallery of Art, 1973), cat. no. 4; The Real Figure (Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, 1978), no. 84; Catalogue of the Collection (Norton Gallery of Art, Fla., 1979), no. 94; George S. Bolge, Leon Kroll (1884-1974) Paintings (1910-1960) (Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, 1980), no. 34; Hale and Bowers, 1983, pl. 111.
In Semi-Nude Hilda, Kroll depicts a fertility figure against a background of rocky cliffs. She is associated with the forces of nature through the way her body forms are repeated by the rocks on the right. Specifically the large dark hill to the right is repeated in the dark shape of the head silhouetted against the light sky; it is also echoed by the sash holding both sides of the robe together making a circle shape beneath the neck. The knee with its rounded light on top of the leg contrasts with the very dark head immediately above it at the top of the canvas. The arm to the left continues the flow of the hill at the left and brings the eye back to the top of the painting. The breasts and nipples accentuate the shapes seen elsewhere along the edges of the composition.

Kroll had earlier related the female form to nature by juxtaposing it with pieces of fruit (see nos. 2, 4) and also rocks (no. 6). Although the figure is robed, the erotic qualities of the body are still evident, since the robe at once frames and covers the various parts of the body. As in the earlier Nude Lucienne (no. 17) in which Kroll used the rich drapery fabric, the artist shows his ability to heighten the sensual impact of the body. Although the face is youthful (as in the vast majority of Kroll's figures) it is not overly idealized.

This painting also calls forth associations to Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa (1503-05, Louvre). In both works the head of the subject is placed high in the painting and surrounded by rocks and landscape in the distance. As Leonardo
 repeated the forms of the drapery in the winding roads, so too does Kroll repeat the undulating hills on the right in the shapes of the head, breasts, hip and knee. Kroll was to be influenced once more by Leonardo while completing the Johns Hopkins mural commission in 1954—twenty-five years later (see p. 149).

This painting is a replica of an earlier one that became discolored, according to Kroll’s letters.\footnote{32}

CATALOGUE 20 (Figure 76)

Zelda
Oil on canvas
1930, 47\(\frac{1}{2}\) x 36\(\frac{1}{2}\)"
Unsigned
Owner: Kroll Estate

Referring to Zelda the artist wrote: “This is a rather arbitrary nude. Zelda had an interesting head, but I made it even a little more stylized. Her breasts dropped a little lower than that, but I gave her a five point lift. I must have lifted them about two inches. It gave the proportion I wanted in the torso. I never copy nature, although my things are representational.”\footnote{33} The strange, if not grotesque, facial features seem to be Ingriste in their derivation, recalling those of
Thetis in Ingres’ *Jupiter and Thetis* (1811, Musée Granat, Aix-en-Provence). The connection to the latter resides primarily in the profile head and Greek nose which falls directly from the forehead. The eyebrow, like Thetis’, is quite hard, forming a distinct line while the lips are dark in color in contrast to Thetis’. And finally, like Ingres’ Thetis, Zelda also wears something in her hair but it is a headband, rather than the diadem worn by Thetis. In referring to Ingres’ Thetis, Robert Rosenblum sees her as a “creature of prodigal fluidity appropriate to her watery origins. In the despair of her supplication she slithers like an eel around the immobile giant, her limbs extending toward him with the delicate pressures of an erotic caress.”

Kroll’s *Zelda*, like Ingres’ Thetis, is also a very erotic if not a watery personage. She stands next to a window looking out to the street below as if she is expecting a caller, or perhaps has a caller from whom she momentarily turns away. Her arms have opened her robe exposing her solidly muscled body, partially nude from the knees up to the tassel dangling between her breasts. The tassel at the end of two tenuous ties or ribbons is the only support for the robe around her shoulders. Because of the almost complete nudity of her body, coupled with the location of the tassels, *Zelda* looks attractive and erotic, yet her strange face repels. Kroll’s *Zelda* seems to be cut off from the everyday world seen beyond the closed window. The mullions even suggest the idea of bars preventing her easy access to the outside. No doubt *Zelda* could have been one of the paintings Pincus-Witten had in mind in referring to Kroll so categorically as a painter of Ingristite nudes. But Kroll does
not copy his sources and, in fact, as I have tried to show, resembles avant-garde artists at this time.

Kroll's Zelda also suggests parallels to Matisse's Girl at a Window (ca. 1930-31, Private collection, Paris). Although it is quite likely that Kroll's Zelda preceded the Matisse by a year, the similarities between the two are quite striking. Both works treat a female subject standing next to a window with their bodies frontal. The heads are turned to the side as they look outside at rooftops and down into a street below. A mullion echoes the tasseled ties holding Zelda's robe at the shoulders. The window frame in Matisse's work directly parallels the woman's mouth. But the strong vertical lines of the window frames act as bar-like devices, preventing easy access to the world beyond the confines of the room. As in the Kroll, the woman appears to be "locked into" the space of the studio, cut off from the world beyond. A primary difference between the two works is that Kroll presents the skyline of a large city through his window, while Matisse's view consists of a street with a beach and two tropical palms in the distance. Kroll's Zelda, furthermore, contains his ubiquitous fruit still-life in the lower right. The use of the fruit recalls the much earlier Red-head, Semi-Nude of 1911 (no. 4), while the view of the city through the window can be related to Reclining Nude with a City View (1929).

In addition to calling forth associations to the past in terms of Ingres and
an artist from Kroll’s era such as Matisse, this painting can be closely related to future developments especially that which came to be known as “Superrealism.” In Arne Besser’s (1935– ) Reba (1976, Collection of the Artist), a relation to Kroll’s Zelda is apparent on several levels. As Christine Lindey has pointed out, Reba defies emotional response and has a deadpan neutrality. The frontal view of Reba seated at a window and peering out at an adult bookstand on the street below with her face in profile invites comparison with Kroll’s Zelda of forty-six years earlier. In both works there is the emphasis on the erotic qualities of the breasts (although Reba wears a brassiere). The subject’s crossed legs with their heavy thighs in Besser’s work further titillates. Both Zelda and Reba seem to invite the viewer by their exposed charms but ultimately their faces deny any real emotional involvement. Kroll’s stylized face and figure and Reba’s half-closed eyes ultimately suggest remoteness and distance. On another level, both artists use still life props to add further meaning to their pictures. Kroll draws analogies between his figure and the pieces of fruit on a table, objectifying the person. Besser, on the other hand, like Kroll in other nudes, invites comparisons to a picture on the wall showing a wholesome young woman in a bonnet driving an early twentieth century car in a Coca-Cola advertisement. The picture of womanhood that he presents is a very different one than the popular culture suggests. Both artists utilize a precise, hard-edge quality, although Besser’s light is brighter and illuminates the forms of Reba’s body more clearly than the softer light in Zelda. Finally, in their
depictions of the city the artists differ greatly. Kroll’s city is not specifically seen; the tall buildings are somewhat vague and impressionistic in feeling suggesting a potentially romantic view of the city. Besser, however, in his clear reference to the adult bookstore, next to the pizza parlor with the rows of monotonous windows above, devoid of human presence, indicates the spiritual decline of the modern city.

Although Zelda never achieved the success of other Kroll nudes in terms of exhibitions, prizes, mention in the literature (the last reference was just two years after its completion), and finally sale, it is still a very important nude within his œuvre, notable for the associations it calls forth both to the past of art and to its future, in Kroll’s occasional Janus-like manner.
CATALOGUE 21 (Figure 77)

Nude in a Blue Chair (Babette)

Oil on canvas

1930, 48\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 36\(\frac{1}{2}\)

Signed lower right recto: “Leon Kroll”

Owner: Whitney Museum of American Art

Provenance: The painting was purchased by Juliana Force from the
Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery, April 15, 1931 for the Whitney Museum.


This painting was originally entitled Babette but was changed for the “sake of propriety” in 1943 at the model’s request. The artist then wrote Mrs. Juliana Force, Director of the Whitney Museum, asking if the title could be changed and she agreed.\(^{37}\) Hale and Bowers in their recent book still reflect some confusion over the title by referring to the painting as Babette in a Blue Chair.

In the same year Bernard Karfiol also painted a nude entitled Babette (Detroit Institute of Art). A third painting entitled Babette (Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh) was completed by Kroll’s colleague Eugene Speicher, in 1931.\(^{38}\) In all
three paintings the model is heavy set with broad shoulders. The facial features are similar with angular eyebrows and oval face suggesting that the same model posed for all three artists. In any case *Nude in a Blue Chair* is the best known of the three and certainly one of Kroll's most monumental paintings. As William Gerdts pointed out, Kroll did some of his best nudes in the 1930s.39

The model is seated in a cerulean blue chair with one leg crossed over the other facing the viewer; her right arm is raised to eye level and bent back toward her head. The other arm is crossed in front of her chest and continues the lines of the legs to the raised arm, leading the viewer's eye to the face in a novel arrangement. The head momentarily interrupts the sweeping line of the chair, while the hip continues the flow of the circular chair around the bottom of the composition. The forms are rendered in a more simplified way than the figures from the 1920s but still convey a sense of realism. The gestural brush stroke of the early years is absent. Although Kroll's typical facial characteristics, namely dark almond-shaped eyes and bow shaped mouth, are evident, the presence of the individual is more apparent than in *Zelda*. Coloristically, the artist has unified the painting by bringing the blues of the chair and warm burnt sienna of the floor into the shadows of the figure, giving them a violet quality. The traditional arrangement of using a raised arm in conjunction with a lowered one is not derivative in a negative sense but is used creatively.
CATALOGUE 22 (Figure 78)

Two Figures-Informal Interior
Oil on canvas;  
1930; 24x20”
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Kroll Estate
Exhibitions: Unknown
References: Unknown

This is the first painting by the artist to contain the subject of the clothed figure along with a nude. Here again, Kroll showed himself to be working in the tradition earlier explored by Manet in his Olympia (1863, Louvre) and Titian in the Venus of Urbino (ca. 1535, Ufizzi Gallery). The main similarity to the earlier two works resides in the juxtaposition of a female nude with female clothed figures. In analyzing the formal presentation of his Two Figures-Informal Interior however, it is apparent that Kroll retained the box-like space characteristic of the Renaissance. Kroll presented his figures within the confines of his studio where the back wall recedes dramatically away as the sharp angles made by the ceiling and floor meet the back wall. Another angle is made by a beam that intersects the wall and ceiling in the upper right, giving the interior a Cézannesque quality, if not a Cubist one. This Cézanne-like quality is further seen in the drapery and loose, almost water-color-like handling of the paint in the treatment of the two windows which are shuttered and cut by the edge of the canvas. They allow neither entry into or out of the space of the studio.

Like the Venus of Urbino, Kroll’s nude is large boned, even somewhat cor-
pulcent. There is a suggestion of the roundness and fleshiness of the stomach by a
crase as it moves away from the pubic area. The hip and calf of the crossed leg as
well as the thigh of this leg suggests the softness and pliancy of flesh by the curved
lines Kroll uses. Furthermore, the face of his model is in profile, suggesting a sense
of modesty along with her youthful vigor. In contrast to what Reff sees as Titian’s
(and I would add, Kroll’s) “ideal of natural sensuality, conscious of its charm yet
somewhat chastened, Manet’s is of an elegant artificiality, perversely attractive in
its lack of warmth.” In his observations on the essential differences between the
Olympia and the Venus of Urbino, he has further observed that “unlike Venus’s
figure, which is softly, fully rounded, Olympia’s is thin, bony, almost emaciated.”

If Kroll can be compared to Titian and Manet in this painting, he ultimately
stands apart. Kroll makes no social or religious comment as did the earlier artists.
He wasn’t interested in underlying symbolism. A second difference resides in the
freshness of Kroll’s composition, despite his conservative style. His composition is
based on a circle, mainly due to the shape of the chair. But at the same time Kroll
incorporates the triangle into the design; the apex of the latter is the standing
figure leaning on the chair. It is possible to think of the basic structure as a circle
incorporated into a triangle. The legs and arm of the nude become the sides of
the triangle. Finally, the round, full hip of the nude at the bottom of the design is
balanced by the smaller round form of the standing figure’s kerchief-covered head.
The sketchlike quality of this painting gives it an immediacy not seen in such examples as Zelda (no. 20), Nude in a Blue Chair (no. 21) or Nude, Dorothy (no. 15). In this respect it seems closer to The Napping Model (no. 14) which also is of intimate scale.

CATALOGUE 23 (Figure 79)
Summer, New York
Oil on canvas
1931; 59x76"
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Kroll Estate; on extended loan to the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., since 1975

In this large painting, the artist has synthesized several different motifs, among them the nude indoors, the nude and still life, the nude shown in front of an open window through which skyscrapers and a park are visible. For the first time in Kroll’s oeuvre there are two clothed figures in conjunction with the nude.

The use of still life, nude, and two clothed figures—with the last in a trian-
gular arrangement—echoes some of the motifs found in Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863, Louvre), but differences outweigh similarities. Kroll's picture is an interior studio scene, while Manet's is an outdoor scene painted in the studio. However, Kroll completed the park scene in the studio of another artist which had a view overlooking Central Park. Thus, Kroll's painting was partially painted directly from the landscape. *Summer-New York* is based on traditional notions of form and space in the use of modeling and perspective whereas Manet disavowed these conventions. In one thing, however, the two paintings are very similar. Both used the triangle as a basis for their compositions. While Manet was much more derivative, basing his arrangement ultimately on Raphael, Kroll uses triangles more intuitively throughout the painting. In referring to this painting Kroll said: "The thing is all done in triangles, and you can see where they fit in. The thigh is a triangle, the arms, the breasts, the head—all of these things. And then the whole picture is a big triangle—and the pears in there too. So I use abstract shapes—the cone and triangle and the square." And Kroll also emphasized that he was concerned with the design, rather than a story telling, or literary basis, for this painting.

Kroll's *Summer-New York* also parallels a painting by another artist who Kroll had met in 1923 and with whom he exchanged paintings. I am referring to Robert Delaunay and *The City of Paris* (1910-12, Musée National d'Art Moderne,
Paris. Although Kroll stated that his work was “entirely different” than Delaunay’s, *The City of Paris* displays striking similarities with the later painting. Both works are concerned with the major city of their respective cultures. The paintings depict the contrast between two different aspects of the city. Michel Hoog, for example, sees Delaunay as being concerned here with “traditional” Paris, made up of the Seine, and houses, in contrast to the modern city personified by the Eiffel Tower. Hoog further sees these two themes reconciled by the presence of the Three Graces in the center.\(^4\) Kroll’s painting likewise is involved with the opposition between what may be termed traditional New York in the form of Central Park and the modern, changing city suggested by the towering skyscrapers which surround the park, seen through the studio window. And like Delaunay, he incorporates three female figures in the foreground of his composition. According to Hoog, Delaunay’s Three Graces personify the elegance of the city of Paris. Kroll’s figures, only one of which is nude, do not have the symbolic reference, the refinement, or the sophistication of Delaunay’s Three Graces, but they are nevertheless very youthful and erotic. And like Delaunay’s nudes, Kroll’s figures also can be seen as pointing up the contrast between “the sensual elegance, the femininity of living persons, and the industrial elegance of the tower [skyscraper] between life and matter.”\(^5\) However, Kroll’s means for doing these things are different from those of Delaunay. He does not emphasize the buildings in his work to the same degree as Delaunay but rather gives greater stress to the status of nature—both inside and outside the
studio—as a mediator between his figures and the architectural environment in the distance. And he does so in a much more conservative style.

In addition, both canvases utilize the view from a window as a central factor in the compositions. In the case of The City of Paris, this is implied by the presence of drapery-like forms in the upper left suggesting a view through a window. Kroll presents the window through which the viewer gains entry into the outside world within the ambience of the studio. Finally, both works call upon the tradition of monumental size or the machine. Delaunay’s canvas is \(8\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}\). Although Kroll’s canvas is smaller, it is his largest painting of a nude thus far presented. In a concern for monumental scale allied with elegance, Hoog saw Delaunay as attempting a synthesis between the modern and the ancient worlds.

Kroll, in his own way, also attempted such a synthesis.

Whether Kroll saw The City of Paris in 1923 while visiting the Delaunays is not documented. However, it is known that the canvas was in Delaunay’s possession until 1936 when it was purchased by its present owner. It appears highly unlikely that a painting of such great size by someone he knew and admired would have been overlooked by Kroll. The time lapse between the possible initial exposure (1923) and Summer-New York would not be a factor, as Kroll in several earlier and later instances reflected the influence of other artists at much longer intervals from his initial exposure to them.
This painting, despite its small size and the fact it is almost unknown in Kroll’s oeuvre, is important because it shows more clearly than other examples how Kroll translated into his own vision the precedents for painting the nude set in an earlier age. Specifically, Kroll here quotes Tintoretto’s Susanna Bathing (ca. 1560, Louvre), in which the voluptuous Susanna is having a “pedicure,” and Rembrandt’s Bathsheba (1654, Louvre), in which the subject is again shown at her bath with a servant washing (?) her feet. In addition, Kroll’s Nude and Negress can be related to Manet’s Olympia (1863, Louvre) because of the frank and even haughty expression which both nudes have as well as the inclusion of a black servant. Although Matisse also dealt with the subject of the woman at her bath, as in La Coiffure (The Hairdresser) of 1907 (Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart), where the subject is seated in a pose like that of Kroll’s nude in Nude and Negress, Kroll clearly owes a great deal more to the paintings of Tintoretto and Manet in subject and composition. 49

The voluptuous and somewhat elongated body of Tintoretto’s Susanna is echoed by Kroll’s nude, as is the position of the servant who is at the right. Al-
though the poses of the two nudes are different—Kroll's nude crosses one leg over
the other while Tintoretto's nude lifts her leg toward the servant—both use a sin­
gle arm to frame the face and call attention to the personality. The framing arm
around the head emphasizes the face and at the same time leads the viewer's eyes
via the other arm to the leg and ultimately the foot on which the servant is work­
ing. The white towel on the lap of the servant repeats the white notes at the far
left of the composition formed by the model's robe and body which lead directly
to the white cloth on the servant's table at the extreme right of the composition.
The curled up leg in the center, with its curving foot and big toe repeating the
larger sensual curves of the body as a whole, remind me of a similar pose used by
Edward Weston in Nude of 1936.

Despite the glorification of the flesh which is important to both artists and
to Rembrandt's Bathsheba as well, Kroll's nude expresses a feeling of aloofness and
aristocratic bearing which suggests the cold "inhuman" nudes for which Kroll was
sometimes criticized. It is true that despite the nude's languorous pose, Kroll's
painting reflects a more dehumanized, less warm personality compared with that
of the nudes by Tintoretto and Rembrandt. In this respect he is closer in feeling
to Manet's Olympia which has also been regarded as conveying a cold feeling in
its expression. The face of Kroll's nude achieves a similar quality within its long
aquiline nose, somnolent eyes and sharp upturned chin pointing to the downturned
bow shaped lips.

CATALOGUE 25 (Figure 81)

Nude with a Yellow Hat
1933; 26x42"
Unsigned
Owner: unknown
Provenance: unknown

This painting represents one of the artist's more erotic nudes of the 1930s. In his discussion of this picture in his Memoirs, Kroll indicated how the model happened to get into this pose by accident as well as the sexual attraction he felt for her. Although the composition may have been "accidental" to some extent, the subject of a nude with a mirror is a very old one in the history of art which became quite popular in the avant-garde as well as in the popular arts in the twentieth century. The pose itself seems to be distantly related to the type of composition seen in several of the late bathers by Renoir, in which the artist emphasizes the buttocks and back. It is probable that Kroll saw Renoir's Grandes Baigneuses of 1885 in the Philadelphia Museum, a city where Kroll exhibited quite frequently.

Two artists contemporary with Kroll who dealt with the subject of a woman with a mirror and who were not discussed in the previous reference to this painting are Robert Delaunay and Alberto Vargas. Delaunay, eighteen years previous, did a painting strikingly similar compositionally to Nude with a Yellow Hat.
entitled *Nude at Her Dressing Table* (1915, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris). Delaunay’s canvas reflects his avant-garde ideas with respect to color and form, but his model is traditionally posed, bending over a dressing table on which a small open book and mirror are located. In addition, Delaunay, like Kroll, emphasized the model’s buttocks by making them quite large, centrally placed, and with interior disk-like forms which are repeated throughout the composition. In *Grey and Red: Anna Mae Vargas* (ca. 1932), Vargas presented a very long-legged blonde, clothed and wearing a hat, seated at her dressing table looking at her compact. Vargas’s drawing has glamorous good looks coupled with an aloof quality, a combination appropriated from cosmetic ads of the 1930s. Although there is little to suggest a direct influence from Vargas in *Nude with a Yellow Hat*, Kroll was certainly aware of his type of feminine ideal, as can be seen in *Nude Dorothy* of 1925 and in works from the forties like *Monique* and *A Day in August.*
Seated Nude

1933-34; 48x36"  
Signed lower right: "Leon Kroll"

Owner: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arthur H. Hearn Fund, 1949

Provenance: Milch Galleries, New York


This painting, along with Nude in a Blue Chair in the Whitney, is one of Kroll's best known nudes. Peter Selz has used Kroll's Seated Nude as an example of much of the figurative work done in the United States in the 1930s. More specifically, he called attention to the influence of Renoir and the "feeling of simple
humanity and warmth” which Kroll gave his nudes. In this view he concurs essentially with Geldzahler’s and Gerdt’s earlier assessments of Kroll’s nudes.

The subject is similar to a series of bathers painted by Renoir in 1885-95 in which nudes are arranging or putting flowers in their hair. The arms of these nudes are partially raised and the figures are seen from the side or back. Kroll’s Seated Nude is also viewed from the side and his treatment of the model’s form suggests the full-bodied women of Renoir’s later years.

The artist’s technique is also quite varied. The application of the paint for the yellow hat and pink coverlet on the bed has been scumbled; but the figure is painted in a very evenly modeled stroke without any scumbling. The contours appear rather precise from a distance but are less so up close. The shadows are bluish in contrast to the warmer hues of the still life, giving the painting a richness of color contrast.

The artist has also written at length about this model as he considered this painting his “chef d’oeuvre” and very “rich in color.” Specifically, he said that the model was the fifteen-year-old daughter of a great friend of his and Viette’s. Although she apparently had an inferiority complex over her “looks,” the girl was proud of her body as she “came and took her clothes off without the slightest hesitation because she was confident that her figure was beautiful. And I talked her up; I fed her ego all through the picture. While I was affectionate with her, I
never abused the situation at all. We were very good friends. She used to kiss me when she came in, and I kissed her, and she kissed my wife, too—it was that kind of friendship and the whole relationship was beautiful.”

Kroll’s feelings toward his models seems to have been ambiguous. On the one hand, in *Nude with a Yellow Hat* he referred to the sexual attraction he felt for the model. And this is reflected by the erotic pose and the expression seen in the eyes as they are reflected in the mirror. But in *Seated Nude*, if we are to take the artist literally, he seems to regard the young girl in a purely professional manner despite the affection shown by the artist and model toward each other. Judging from the critical acclaim *Seated Nude* has received since it was painted, I would say that Kroll’s simple joy in painting the female form has been successfully communicated.
CATALOGUE 27 (Figure 83)

Anne in a White Scarf
1937; 36x27"
Signed lower left: "Leon Kroll"
Owner: Private Collection, ca. 1975-76
Provenance: Cornelius Kroll Collection, Houston, Tx., ca. 1946
Exhibitions: unknown
References: unknown

Anne in a White Scarf continues with variation several of the motifs seen earlier in Nude Lucienne of 1927 (no. 17) and Nude with a Yellow Hat of 1933 (no. 25). In all three works the model wears some form of head covering, in this case a scarf. In addition, the model in Anne in a White Scarf leans forward onto a table and looks into a mirror, as in Nude with a Yellow Hat. Although the mirror is only partially visible it does not appear to be a painting, as the reflection of the top edge of the table continues almost directly into the framed image. The main difference between Nude with a Yellow Hat and the present example is that in the former the back is arched, the buttocks fully shown, and the composition is on a horizontal axis. The present example has a more accurate foreshortening of the arm that leans on the table and supports the body. In addition, the robe frames the buttocks which brings the eyes back up to the upper left of the canvas where the model is looking. The idea of framing the buttocks with drapery can be seen in a series of standing nudes painted by Renoir in 1889, in which the figures are seen from the back and hold a robe or chemise just below their buttocks. I do not know whether Kroll saw these paintings by Renoir, so the relationship may be entirely
In *Anne in a White Scarf*, Kroll has based his composition on such apparent accidentals as the triangle of the collar of the robe, the triangle of the supporting arm, and the variation of the triangle formed by the ends of the scarf around the model's head. All of these forms are in turn contrasted with the curves of the top of the head, shoulder, and curve of the robe around the buttocks. The artist, in commenting on this work, made no mention of these formal relationships, just his pleasure in painting the figure, which in this case appears to be quite sexual in nature. Kroll writes: "This is just a nude, kind of a graceful nude. She had a lovely behind and I loved painting her." This canvas and Kroll's comment reflect the painter's celebration of the female body and what Cassou and Grigson see as a "compromise between desire and repression" which leads the artist to walk "a tight-rope between oppositions."

CATALOGUE 28 (Figure 84)

*Nude on a Blue Couch*
Oil on canvas
1941; 26\(\frac{1}{2}\)×42"
Provenance: ACA Galleries, New York
Exhibitions: unknown

This painting, again very like Ingres in feeling, continues the subject of
the reclining odalisque discussed earlier with regard to *Nude Lucienne*, no. 17. In 1942 the picture was simply referred to as “Nude on a Blue Couch,” but in later references it has been variously called “Sleeping Beauty” and “Sleeping Venus.”

In an exhibition entitled *Leon Kroll: Selection From Various Periods; 1913-65* held at the ACA Galleries, New York, January, 1966, a painting with the identical title of the present example was included; the date of 1963 indicates a later variant of our present example. Barbara Gallati in a review of a later Kroll exhibition at ACA illustrates another variant of this subject which she calls *Sleeping Venus* and dates from the early 1930s. Realistic features give the face a more human aspect than the mythological titles suggest.

**CATALOGUE 29 (Figure 85)**

**Adolescent Girl**

1942-43; 36x27"

Signed lower left: “Leon Kroll"

Owner: unknown

Provenance: Formerly Frank Kupfer Collection

Exhibitions: unknown


In *Adolescent Girl* Kroll presented his conception of young womanhood. Her face, with its large dark eyes is rather pensive, and her long dark hair falls behind her shoulders and small breasts. Her rather elongated and muscled torso suggests youth and perhaps even an awkwardness associated with youth. Long arms lead the viewer’s eyes to the drapery which acts as a visual stoppage, pre-
venting our eyes from leaving the canvas and returning them to the breasts and eyes of the young girl. A similar use of drapery in a half-length nude was seen previously in *Nude Dorothy* of 1925. However, the face in *Adolescent Girl* is not as schematized as in the earlier example. But the large, dark, almond-shaped eyes reflect the topology associated with Kroll’s faces. Kroll, in this work, in addition to his usual formal concerns is able to present the state of mind of his subject, in contrast to earlier works such as *Nude in a Blue Chair (Babette)* 1930, or *Zelda* also 1930, where the figure tells no story.

**CATALOGUE 30 (Figure 86)**

**Female Nude Drying Her Hair**

Oil on canvas

ca. 1943-46; 36½ x 27"

Signed lower left: "Leon Kroll"

Owner: Dr. Gordon F. Lupien, Boston, Ma.

Provenance: Kroll Estate, Pierce Gallery, Hingham, Ma., ca. 1978

Exhibitions: unknown

References: unknown

This painting has never been discussed or reproduced in the Kroll literature and thus poses several problems, among them the correct date and title of the work. The painting has been executed in a manner that distinguishes it from all other Kroll nudes discussed thus far. Not only has the background not been completely filled in, but the painter has also outlined the figure and loosely filled in the areas between these lines. In the background, large areas of the gessoed canvas are evident, especially in the upper right-hand corner. Kroll did sev-
eral paintings in which large areas of the canvas or figure were left unpainted for design reasons, including *Dancers*, *Nude and Three Girls Around a Piano*, and *Head of Marie-Claude* from the early 1940s. On the basis of the definite dates for *Dancers* and *Head of Marie-Claude*, the present example can most likely be dated to the early to middle 1940s. In *Dancers*, three figures, one of whom is nude, are depicted. Around them appears a dark "mandorla"-like shape, giving the painting a strongly abstract appearance. The towel and raised arm are quite two-dimensional, further enhancing the abstract qualities of the background. The face, back part of the towel and far arm are in shadow so that the model, with her closed eyes, conveys a very pensive and meditative quality, making this painting similar to the *Adolescent Girl* of 1942-43. Kroll in this canvas appears to be trying to bring a more sketch-like appearance into his work perhaps in response to the development of abstract art in the 1940s.
CATALOGUE 31 (Figure 87)

**Nude Back**

1945; 42x26"

Signed lower right: "Leon Kroll"

Owner: unknown

Provenance: unknown


The present painting appears to be the prototypical example of why Milton Brown described Kroll's nudes as a mixture of "voluptuousness, sentimentality, and stilted refinement." In this example, Kroll again uses the device of the drapery to frame and enclose an erotic part of the female form. As in the *Nude Dorothy* of 1925, the drapery helps to move the viewer's eyes around the composition. In the former example, however, the eroticism of the pose is enhanced by the drapery over the pubic area. In *Nude Back*, as in *Anne in a White Scarf* (1937), the drapery does not "hide" but rather frames or encloses the erotic form of the buttocks, a device which also enhances the erotic appeal of the form. In addition, from a compositional point of view Kroll very nicely repeated the volute of the Empire sofa behind the model by extending the hair of the figure in a rounded shape beyond the forehead. Finally the sharp angles of the screen standing beyond
the sofa, contrast with the rounded forms of the buttocks, breast, shoulders and chin to produce a varied visual effect. It is in Kroll's mastery of his compositional elements which lifts this work beyond illustration and/or calendar art to which, at first glance, it appears to be perilously close.

On the other hand, the painting is quite similar to advertisements for various products at that time. In the model's youth, full and rounded face and lips, along with her pointed nose, she seems to personify the ideal of the "all-American girl" who was (and is) used to sell the myriad products of American business via advertisements. Although in the Life article (June 28, 1948) in which it was illustrated, Kroll referred to this painting as "heroic" rather than "sexy," Nude Back does not have as much of the "heroic" or "monumental" about it as does the earlier Nude in a Blue Chair (Babette) of 1930. Even though both nudes are similar in not telling a personal "story" or narrative, the earlier example has simpler forms of a geometric nature and is placed within a more austere context compared to the present example.

Because the model for Nude Back is sexy and vacuous she can be related to advertisements and later to Pop Art. This can clearly be seen by comparing the face and head in Nude Back to numerous advertisements from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. The modishly full, rounded cheeks and chin and even, short curly hair style are apparent in contemporary advertisements such as the
Glentex Scarf Advertisements of January and February 1952, in Mademoiselle.\textsuperscript{69} These advertisements likewise show young women, apparently without any inner conflicts or concerns. The characteristics can also be seen in advertisements that use live models, such as a Jantzen advertisement of December, 1951, in the same magazine.\textsuperscript{70}

In comparing these ads and Kroll’s painting to a Pop Art work by Roy Lichtenstein such as Girl with Ball (1961, Roy Lichtenstein Collection), one sees the latter as rounding forms to a point of anatomical distortion.\textsuperscript{72} In comparing the arms of the subject in both works, this biomorphic quality is most clearly observed. Although Lichtenstein’s figure is in a frontal position and smiling, the hair in both is similar, not so much because of the overall shape, but because of the stress on sharp highlights in the hair of the respective figures, again approximating advertising art which was in fact the source of Lichtenstein’s painting.\textsuperscript{73} However, Lichtenstein differs in one key respect—he maintains the flatness of the picture plane. But in their mutual adherence to the ideal of “glamour” as expressed in the popular arts, Kroll’s painting and Lichtenstein’s can clearly be related.
CATALOGUE 32 (Figure 88)

Reflections
ca. 1946; 48\(\frac{1}{2}\)x38\(\frac{3}{4}\)"
Unsigned
Owner: Leon Kroll Estate
Provenance: unknown

In Reflections Kroll presented a standing nude before a full-length mirror that rests on the floor. Her left leg is bent at the knee and is supported on a chair; the right leg is carrying her weight. Both arms are raised with the hands in the model’s hair. The form of the body is strongly modeled with Kroll limiting himself to very few values. In the lower right leg for example, the artist used the dark juxtaposed with a middle value without any transitional tone in between. A similar value contrast is seen even more cogently in the buttock which receives the light near the hip and abruptly falls into a very dark shadow, again without any transitional values. The figure and its reflection in the mirror act as a very dark two-dimensional abstract shape within the light field of the otherwise mostly unpainted canvas.

Kroll, in his reference to another “unfinished” painting entitled Head of Marie-Claude, also alluded to “a nude” which very possibly is our present example. Although referring to both works as “unfinished,” Kroll implied that some paintings
are best left “unfinished” as they are more attractive in that state. He wrote: “This is incomplete. It's the same with that nude over there. It's something very nice. Sometimes when I have no more to say I just don't say it. There's no point in unattractively finishing a picture.”

The technique pictured here, of finishing one area of the canvas to a high degree and leaving the subsidiary areas or objects vaguely suggested, if at all, with one or two strokes and allowing the bare canvas to play an important role was also seen in the Female Nude Drying Her Hair (no. 30). Kroll's production of other seemingly improvisatory paintings during the 1940s possibly reflects influences from abstract art at this time.
CATALOGUE 33 (Figure 89)

Dancers in Repose
Oil on canvas
1946; 27x36"
Unsigned
Owner: Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio
Provenance: Joseph Kahn, New York, gave the painting to the Butler Institute in 1965.

Dancers in Repose constitutes a summing up of many of the ideas the artist had previously incorporated into his nude paintings—the combination of the semi-nude and clothed figure and of black and white models as well as a view of the city seen through the curtained windows of a studio.

The color used in this picture contains intense contrasts of hue not previously seen in Kroll’s oeuvre, especially in the strong contrast between the red leotards of the dancer with the green drapery she holds against her body, as well as between the red-orange couch and the blue-green drapery covering the lap of the semi-nude. This use of color may reflect influences coming into his work from the avant-garde, as happened, for example, with John Sloan’s work at this time. It was in the mid-1940s that Sloan’s color, like that of Kroll’s, underwent a transformation. Goodrich remarks that “it is remarkable that this new blossoming in transparency and brilliant color took place when Sloan was in the middle seventies.”75 Kroll was
62 when he painted Dancers in Repose.

CATALOGUE 34 (Figure 90)
A Day in August
Oil on canvas
1950; 48x36"
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Michael C. Palitz Collection, New York
Exhibitions: Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh International Exhibitions of Paintings, October 19-December 21, 1950
References: Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Paintings (October 19-December 21, 1950), cat. no. 33; Antiques, 105 (April 1974), 669 (reproduction); Hale and Bowers, 1983, pl. 139.

Kroll called this painting “one of my top nudes ...” He wrote in his Memoirs that it was “built on a triangle, in the abstract.” The pose is very similar to his earlier Seated Nude of 1933-34 (no. 26) but the setting differs in being outdoors. However, in a rather unspecific way, he wrote in his Memoirs that some of it was painted in the studio and some outdoors. The use of black to dull his color gives the painting a less intense coloration compared to the previous example. In the repetition of the triangles made by the bent leg, arm and breasts, the artist uses a device seen in Nude, Bearsville from the early 1920s (no. 11), though without the painterly brushwork of the earlier painting. The evolution of Kroll’s style over the years is apparent when comparing Nude, Bearsville (no. 11) with the present example. Even if one compares works relatively close in time, such as Reflections of 1946 (no. 32), with A Day in August, the change of approach is obvious. In the
emphasis on the individual brush stroke, *Nude Bearsville* is closer to *Reflections* than to *A Day in August*, a work in which the strokes are imperceptible.

The subject and treatment of *A Day in August*, like that for *Nude Back* (no. 31), can be related to advertisements from these years. However, this idyllic scene reflects the artist’s own experiences also. In writing about this model and period the artist recorded: “We’d go in swimming there without a stitch on, because nobody was there. Her uncle who owns this place used to come in too.”

**CATALOGUE 35 (Figure 91)**

**Relaxation—Nude Reading a Newspaper**

Oil on canvas
c. 1958-60; 26x42" (?)
Signed lower right: “Leon Kroll”
Owner: Grace Huntley Pugh, Mamaroneck, New York
Provenance: Kroll Estate

The present owner of this canvas has confirmed that the same work has been reproduced in the above two books, although the dates and dimensions are different in each. In the Fort Lauderdale catalogue, the dimensions are larger (34½x50½") and the date is two years later than the one given by Hale and Bowers. Also, the illustration in the Fort Lauderdale catalogue has been cropped. Why these discrepancies of date, dimension, and image exist are not known at this time.

In this painting, Kroll again took up the reading theme seen earlier in
Reclining Nude with a City View of 1929 (no. 18). In the present example, the model is shown reading from a newspaper instead of a book. As Patricia Hills has noted, reading was an activity of the leisure class in the nineteenth century and reading from expensive illustrated books was, in the representational arts, generally associated with women of this class.\textsuperscript{79} Reading from newspapers was usually reserved for men and was a symbol of male authority.\textsuperscript{80} In our example the curvaceous model suggests both the changed times and her worldliness by means of the newspaper. On the other hand, she seems quite closed off from the real world in the confines of the artist's studio.

Like Combing Hair and Nude and Negress of 1932 (no. 24), this painting can be related to the nineteenth and early twentieth century feminine ideal of repose and relaxation. The face, if not the body, of the nude seen here possesses an aristocratic and sophisticated bearing often found in the late nineteenth century. Ultimately, however, the voluptuousness of the model, composition and still life are modern, and characteristically Kroll's. The composition, although based on the very traditional subject of the reclining nude, has been handled inventively. This is seen in the way the artist used the drapery at the left to balance the newspaper above the leg and the way the center arm repeats the arm on the right as well as the curves of the upper leg and drapery at the left.
CATALOGUE 36 (Figure 92)

Reclining Nude with Reflections—Nude Rema
Oil on canvas
1967-68; 30x50"
Signed and dated lower right: “Leon Kroll, 1967-68”
Owner: Leon Kroll Estate
Provenance: unknown
Exhibitions: unknown
References: unknown

In Reclining Nude with Reflections—Nude Rema, the artist manifested once again his earlier fascination with the nude and its mirror image. In the first instance of this motif, Nude with a Yellow Hat of 1933 (no. 25), the mirror image consisted only of the face. In the second usage of the mirror, Reflections of 1946 (no. 32), the artist showed the full figure. In the present example, Kroll expanded his treatment further by including not only the model but a reflection of himself with his easel, a traditional device that may be traced to the fifteenth century.81 In the twentieth century, it was used by Matisse and, most famously, by Picasso.82 Carol Duncan has written persuasively about the implications of male/artist domination over the female model this particular strategy possesses.83

Despite the artist’s conservative style, his compositional solution has an abstract power. The dark curve of the couch is repeated by the curve of the model’s hip and the dark opening of the fireplace on the far left. The white sheet on the left carries the eye back to the front of the figure by means of its curved shape which does not intersect the canvas edge as does the fireplace. In between the dark
couch shape on the right and the fireplace on the left, the mirror image contains
the artist, his model and a third clothed and seated figure. This mirror image of
the artist occupies the center of the composition. His arm holding the brush to
the reflected canvas repeats the movement of the couch, model and fireplace but at
the same time contrasts with the direction of the model’s arms. The curve of the
picture frame in the upper right and the couch immediately below are repeated by
the curve made by the junction of the thigh and abdomen as well as the breasts.
The verticals of the mirror and fireplace act as a minor theme against the wavy lines
of the rest of the composition. On the mantel of the fireplace, barely visible in the
shadow, stands the bronze entitled The Rape of Europa given to the painter by his
friend, the sculptor, Paul Manship in exchange for a portrait Kroll did of Manship’s
daughter. The brushwork, as evidenced in the handling of the surrounding forms
such as the fireplace as well as in the way some contours become lost in the shadows,
seems to be looser here than in some of the earlier nudes from the 1930s.

Because of its poetic mood and the uniqueness of Kroll’s compositional
ideas, this painting is one of Kroll’s strongest efforts late in his career. There is
nothing here to suggest any connection with his earlier involvement with such varied
influences as Art Deco, advertising, or the pin up. Nor is this figure even Ingriste.
Kroll presents his fascination with the ordinary forms of the studio environment as
well as the erotic forms of the model before him.
Summary Remarks

This catalogue of Leon Kroll’s nudes at once answers and supports questions and conclusions initially posited in the Introduction. First, Kroll’s stylistic evolution does not proceed uniformly. In the earliest nudes for example (no. 5), there is a definite relationship to the spontaneous style of the Henri school. This is continued into the 1920s, but is then modified first by the influence of Renoir and Cézanne and later by the impact of the Ingres Revival, when Kroll commences a tighter style. In the 1940s he once again modified his style to a more sketch-like facture but simultaneously continued the tight, Ingriste (facile) approach with which he is usually associated (no. 15). At the same time Kroll showed himself able to interpret the female nude in a straightforward manner, emphasizing the model’s individuality, without any connections either to the avant-garde or Ingres. Likewise, with regard to the issue of typology, Kroll emerges as inconsistent. Cool, aloof types of women co-exist in time with warm, even passionate nudes. Certainly, Kroll’s treatment of the nude is complex, an assertion underscored not only by the varied influences he assimilated from the Old Masters and avant-garde but also by the manner in which he drew from imagery of popular culture as well. Despite the generally retardataire character of his style, Kroll’s depiction of the nude possesses a rich and varied nature.
CATALOGUE FOOTNOTES


5 Kroll was especially fond of Courbet. In his *Memoirs*, pp. 69, 111, he mentioned seeing a “beautiful little nude by Courbet” in Matisse’s studio, and how Matisse really liked it. See pp. 66-67 above for a discussion of this idea in Ingres. Kroll had also owned a small landscape by Courbet (9\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 12\(\frac{3}{4}\))”. See “Letter to Carl Weeks,” November 7, 1929.


7 The acquisition date of this painting is not known by the writer at this time. Another example of a seated woman having her hair worked on while looking
into a hand-held mirror is La Coiffure, 1922. See Artforum, 12 (September 1973), 5 for a reproduction.

8 For a discussion of the female body and fruit see Linda Nochlin, “Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth Century Art,” in Thomas Hess and Linda Nochlin, Woman as Sex Object, p. 11.


10 Saunders, p. 88.

11 Saunders, p. 88.

12 Saunders, p. 88.

13 International Studio, 89 (February 1921), 37.


15 Hale and Bowers, Memoirs, p. 13. Kroll had painted seascapes with large rocks and diminuitive figures in the distance as late as the summer of 1912, possibly while painting with Hopper at Gloucester.


17 Fink, p. 91.

18 Fink, p. 231.

19 Quoted in Fink, p. 101.


22 Kroll had known Davies at least since the time of the Armory Exhibition as Kroll had been invited by the latter to exhibit his work in this exhibition. A particular example by Davies that parallels Kroll's example is Nude in Landscape (ca. 1908-1909, Rita and Daniel Fraad Collection). See Linda Ayres and Jane Myers, American Paintings, Watercolors, and Drawings from the Collection of Rita and Daniel Fraad (Fort Worth, Texas, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, May 24 - July 14, 1985), p. 65. In the Davies example as in the Kroll, a full length nude
is in the process of taking a step forward. Her rather elongated body is balanced by a thin sapling on the right which echoes the curve of the young woman’s thigh. The relationship between this single tree and the figure holds the composition together. Kroll also uses the trees in his painting not only to repeat the vertical of his bather’s body, but to repeat and vary the horizontals of the bather’s arms. Unlike Kroll, Davies uses the curving horizontal of the hills in the background to contrast with the verticals of the figure and tree. In her catalogue discussion of this work Linda Ayres mentions the strong influence of Puvis de Chavannes on Davies, an artist whose murals in Boston Kroll had studied. Whether Kroll could have seen Davies’s Nude in Landscape is not known.


24 Brown, p. 82.

25 For a discussion of this magazine see pp. 71 ff. Another striking relationship to Kroll’s facial type in Nude Dorothy can be seen in the covers of Benito (1892-?) of 1927. See Deco: 1925-1935, foreward by Mario Amaya, (Stratford, Ontario, The Gallery, June 10 - September 2, 1975), p. 31, no. 173a, 173b. Kroll had one of his paintings illustrated in Vanity Fair also, but it was not like Nude Dorothy in the facial treatment. See Vanity Fair, 39 (October 1932), 32-33.

26 Hale and Bowers, pl. 103. This letter is located in the “Kroll File” of the Denver Art Museum.

27 The practice of mothers exhibiting their daughters to artists or dressing them as nymphs and exhibiting them apparently goes back to Savonarola’s time in Florence and was practiced in the Second Empire of France where it was satirized by Felicien Rops. See C. J. Bulliet, The Courtesan Olympia: An Intimate Survey of Artists and their Mistress-Models (New York, 1930), p. 121. Kroll remarked that her mother acted like “an old procuress” who seemed to want to “sell her to the highest bidder.” See Hale and Bowers, p. 68.

28 Hale and Bowers, p. 71.


30 Robert Pincus-Witten, Artforum, 9 (January 1971), 77.

31 For a discussion of the window theme in nineteenth century European Romanticism, see Lorenz Eitner, “Open Window and Storm-Tossed Boat, an Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism,” Art Bulletin, 37 (December 1955), 281-90. On p. 287, Eitner states that Matisse also favored the open window in many of
his compositions. Eitner saw the window as a threshold and at the same time a barrier. In the nineteenth century it suggested the conflict between the romantic and classicist attitudes personified by nature and the studio. The contrast between the distant and the near at hand reflected a desire for escape from the “snugness” of everyday life. For a discussion of the window motif and its meaning in Kroll’s and Matisse’s oeuvre, see pp. 87-91 above.

32 There is extensive correspondence over this matter between Kroll and R. H. Norton, the original commissioner of the painting, in the files of the Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida. The museum has provided me with copies of this material.

33 Hale and Bowers, pp. 103-104.

34 Robert Rosenblum, Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres (New York, n.d.), p. 84.

35 For an illustration of this painting see Albert C. Barnes and Violette DeGrazia, The Art of Henri Matisse (Second edition; Merion, Pa., 1959), no. 117.


37 In the letter of February 3rd, 1943, to Mrs. Force, Kroll stated that Babette asked him if he could change the title to something less “committal,” because in Kroll’s words, she was now a “grand lady, married to a respectable well to-do citizen,” and “is the mother of one child and the stepmother of another.” Kroll believed that “she probably feels that the children and she herself may have unhappy moments should some kind friend point out the picture to the children as momma.” Kroll went on to add that he didn’t care what the Whitney Museum entitled the painting, but that “later on the children may want to change the title back to Babette, immodest as that may seem on my part.” See correspondence between Ms. Force and Kroll dated February 3-5, 1943 in the files of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

38 The painting was deaccessioned in 1978 and sold by Christies, New York.

39 See p. 11, no. 25 for a reference to Gerdts.


41 Reff, p. 57.

42 Hale and Bowers, p. 104.

43 Hale and Bowers, p. 104.


45 Hoog, p. 56.

46 Hoog, p. 56.
Hoog, p. 53. According to Hoog, Delaunay had in his possession a photograph of a Pompeian version of the Three Graces.

Hoog, p. 56.

Kroll’s Nude and Negress seems to capture the sense of relaxation and “luxury” which were so important to Matisse. Kroll could have possibly seen La Coiffure in Michael Stein’s collection before it was sold to the Staatsgalerie. Kroll, it seems to me, quotes neither Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Manet or Matisse directly but rather borrows something from each of them and recombines the sources in his personal way. Matisse was one of the major twentieth century artists who continued to be inspired by the Oriental tradition of the Odalisque and slave seen earlier in the nineteenth century in Ingres and Manet. See Rosenblum, p. 145. For another twentieth century example of the Odalisque and “slave” theme see Felix Valloton’s (1865-1925) La Blanche et la Noire (1913, Hahnloser Collection, Winterthur). The latter is illustrated in Jean Cassou and Geoffrey Grigson, The Female Form in Painting (New York, 1953), no. 56.


See Reff, Manet: Olympia, p. 57.

Kroll, Oral History, pp. 168-69. He states that he had a “little crush” on her and that she was beautiful and “had a beautiful behind.” He further states that it was a very “sexy looking thing, I suppose, but I didn’t think of it like that.”

The subject of the female looking into a mirror, either hand-held, or fastened to a table (as in Nude with a Yellow Hat), was very popular in both academic and avant-garde art in the early twentieth century. For avant-garde examples see Ferdinand Leger’s Woman with a Mirror (1920, Moderna Museet, Stockholm) and Picasso’s La Coiffure of 1920. For an illustration of the latter, see Artforum, 12 (September 1973), 5. For a discussion of the female and mirror in the popular arts see above pp. 101-102. See above, p. 100 for a discussion of the nude and mirror in the seventeenth century. A possible influence for Kroll is Henri Matisse’s Carmelina (1903, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), although here the mirror reflection is of the artist not the model. John Jacobus has noted the “presence of reflected mirror images of the artist and his model that would play an important role in the second half of his career.” See John Jacobus, Henri Matisse (New York, n.d.), p. 104. It was much later in Kroll’s career also when he first used reflections of himself in his paintings of the nude. (See below, pl. 36.) Carmelina, like Kroll’s Nude with a Yellow Hat, is a celebration of the female body and also like many of Kroll’s nudes was not meant to be a portrait. Rather, Matisse gives his painting an overtly sexual emphasis by his positioning of the model’s breasts at the viewer’s eye level. See Anne L. Poulet, et al,
Corot to Braque: French Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1979), p. 133. The Carmelina was purchased in 1932, one year before Kroll painted Nude with a Yellow Hat.


55 For an illustration, see Hoog, p. 59.

56 For an illustration see Alberto Vargas and Reid Austin, Vargas (New York, 1978), pp. 59, 83.


58 Selz, p. 342.

59 See above, pp. 11, 18.

60 Kroll, Oral History, p. 173. He worked on it for three months and continued to repaint it after exhibiting. See Sacartoff, p. 121.

61 Hale and Bowers, pp. 75-76.


63 Cassou and Grigson, p. 21. See catalogue no. 27, no. 63, p. 248 for a similar comment by the artist toward another model.

64 American Artist, 6 (June 1942), 6.


67 These have not been reproduced to my knowledge. Another example would be Two Nudes: Haitian Girls, Dark Grace.

68 Brown, p. 82.

69 This is especially true in regard to the hair styles and facial characteristics. See “Glentex advertisement,” Mademoiselle, 34 (January 1952), 44.

70 “Jantzen Sweater Advertisement,” Mademoiselle, 34 (December 1951), 11.


72 Lindey, Superrealist Painting and Sculpture, p. 30.

73 Lindey, p. 30.

74 Kroll, Oral History, p. 256.
75 Goodrich, John Sloan, p. 74.
76 Hale and Bowers, Memoirs, p. 76.
77 See nos. 68-70 for examples.
80 Hills, p. 65.
81 This can be seen in Jan Van Eyck's Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride (1432, National Gallery, London) and in the seventeenth century in Velázquez's Venus and Cupid (ca. 1648-51, National Gallery, London) where only the mirror reflection of the model is seen.
82 See Catalogue no. 3 above.
83 Duncan, Carol, "Virility and Domination in Early 20th Century Painting," Artforum, 12 (December 1973), 34.
84 Hale and Bowers, Memoirs, p. 92.
Figure 1. Bryson Burroughs, The Age of Gold, Collection of the Newark Museum, Gift of Mrs. Felix Fuld, Newark, New Jersey
Figure 2. Charles C. Curran, Delphiniums Blue, Private Collection
Figure 4. Leon Kroll, *A Lovely Day*, Destroyed
Figure 5. Leon Kroll, The Brooklyn Bridge, Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund M. Hyman Collection
Figure 6. Leon Kroll, Queensborough Bridge, Leon Kroll Estate
Figure 7. Leon Kroll, *The Bridge-Winter*, Tulsa City-County Library, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Figure 8. George Bellows, The Bridge, Blackwell’s Island, Collection of the Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, Toledo, Ohio
Figure 9. George Bellows, *Four Friends*, Present location unknown
Figure 10. Leon Kroll, *Terminal Yards*, Flint Art Institute, Gift of Mrs. Arthur Jerome Eddy, Flint, Michigan
Figure 11. Leon Kroll, Broadway (Looking South) in Snow, Present location unknown
Figure 12. Leon Kroll, Building Manhattan Bridge, Serene and Irving Mitchell Felt Collection, New York, New York
Figure 13. Leon Kroll, Basque Landscape, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Figure 14. Leon Kroll, The Bull Ring, Present location unknown
Figure 15. Leon Kroll, *Portrait of Manuel Komroff*, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine
Figure 16. Leon Kroll, Boats in the Harbor, Jean and Samuel Saprin Collection, Sherman Oaks, California
Figure 17. Leon Kroll, Camden, Maine, Leon Kroll Estate, New York
Figure 18. Leon Kroll, *In the Country*, Collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan
Figure 19. George Bellows, Grammercy Park, Private Collection
Figure 20. Leon Kroll, *The Lake in the Mountains*, Flint Art Institute, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Jerome Eddy, Flint, Michigan
Figure 21. Leon Kroll, Cheyenne Mountain, Leon Kroll Estate
Figure 22. Charles C. Curran, *Noonday Sunlight*, Richmond Art Museum, Richmond Indiana
Figure 23. Leon Kroll, *A Day in August*, Private collection
Figure 24. Leon Kroll, *The Park-Winter*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio
Figure 27. Leon Kroll, *Honfleur*, Leon Kroll Estate
Figure 28. Leon Kroll, *Cassis*, Collection unknown
Figure 29. Leon Kroll, *Young Women*, Iowa State Education Association, Des Moines, Iowa
Figure 30. Georges Lepape, Original for the cover of Vogue, Great Britain; 3 October 1928, Original in the collection of Alain Lesieutre
Figure 31. Leon Kroll, My Wife’s Family, Bayly Museum, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia
Figure 32. Leon Kroll, The Garden at Neuilly, Private Collection, New York, New York
Figure 34. Cap Brun, Robert Cross Collection, Charlottesville, Virginia
Figure 35. Leon Kroll, *Path by the Sea*, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
Figure 36. Georges Lepape, Vogue Cover, (United States), 1 May 1928
Figure 37. Leon Kroll, *New York Window*, H. J. DuLaurence Collection, Hingham, Massachusetts
Figure 38. Leon Kroll, *Quarry on the Cape*, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Bell Collection, Chevy Chase, Maryland
Figure 39. Leon Kroll, The Household, Bayly Museum, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia
Figure 40. Leon Kroll, Cape Ann, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York
Figure 4.1. George Petty, Jantzen Swimsuit Advertisement, c. 1937

New Fabric Sensation - WATER VEIL

Swim Suits - Sun Clothes

Jantzen
Figure 42. Leon Kroll, Girl on a Balcony, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Gift of the Estate of Mary S. Higgins, Washington, D.C.
Figure 44. Leon Kroll, *The Triumph of Justice*, Attorney General’s Office, Washington, D.C.
Figure 45. Leon Kroll, The Defeat of Justice, Attorney General's Office, Washington, D.C.
Figure 46. Leon Kroll, *The Road From the Cove*, Private collection
Figure 47. Leon Kroll, Morning in New England, Collection unknown
Figure 48. Winslow Homer, *A Light on the Sea*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Figure 49. Leon Kroll, *To Keep Our Land Secure, Buy War Bonds*, Delaware Museum of Art, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, Wilmington, Delaware
Figure 50. Leon Kroll, *The Pool*, Leon Kroll Estate
Figure 52. Leon Kroll, *Omaha Beach Chapel Mosaic*, Normandy, France
Figure 53. Leon Kroll, *The Famous Beauties of Baltimore*, Shriver Hall, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland
Figure 54. Leon Kroll, The Original Faculty of Medicine, Shriver Hall, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland
Figure 55. Leon Kroll, *Driftwood*, Leon Kroll Estate
Figure 56. Katherine Cleaves, Collection unknown
Figure 57. Leon Kroll, Male Nude, National Academy of Design, New York, New York
Figure 58. Leon Kroll, *A Nude*, Collection unknown
Figure 59. Leon Kroll, Two Nudes, Collection unknown
Figure 60. Leon Kroll, Red Head, Semi-Nude, Collection unknown
Figure 61. Leon Kroll, *Red Head, Torso*, Walter and Arlene Deitch Collection, New York, New York
Figure 62. Leon Kroll, *Nude in a Landscape*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa.
Figure 63. Leon Kroll, *Nude Seated on a Bed*, Stuart Pivar Collection, New York, New York
Figure 64. Leon Kroll, Portrait of a Nude, Private collection
Figure 65. Leon Kroll, *Seated Nude*, Gordon F. Lupien, M.D. Collection, Boston, Massachusetts
Figure 66. Leon Kroll, *Standing Nude*, Marine Arts Gallery, Salem, Massachusetts
Figure 67. Leon Kroll, *Nude*, Bearsville, Leon Kroll Estate
Figure 68. Leon Kroll, *Nude in the Armchair*, Private collection
Figure 69. Leon Kroll, Sleeping Nude in an Interior, Private collection
Figure 70. Leon Kroll, The Napping Model, Judy Ehrlich Collection, New York, New York
Figure 71. Leon Kroll, *Nude Dorothy*, Private collection, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Figure 72. Leon Kroll, *Nita Nude*, The Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado
Figure 73. Leon Kroll, *Nude Lucienne*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa
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