

Adam Emory Albright

Adam Emory Albright (1862-1957) began his career as a landscape painter, later specializing in paintings of children at play, against landscape backgrounds. It is likely that some of his earliest work was done in Kansas, for he was a graduate of a Kansas university. Born in Monroe, Wisconsin, Albright studied with Henry Fenton Spread and John Vanderpoel at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Chicago from 1881 until 1883, becoming a student of Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1883 until 1886. After some training in Munich with his fellow Wisconsin artist Carl Marr (later Carl Von Marr), Albright studied with Benjamin Constant in Paris. He was to become the finest Paris-trained figure painter to emerge immediately before the Columbian Exposition, Albright set up a studio in Chicago in 1888 and was exhibiting with the Society of Artists by 1890.

Albright appears to have abandoned the landscape early on, and to have chosen juvenile subjects for which he became famous. At first specializing in street urchins, he soon turned to rustic children in outdoor settings. After the Columbian Exhibition, having had greater exposure to Impressionism, Albright began painting more colorful and sun-filled work. In 1897 the Birth of his twin sons, Ivan Le Lorraine and Malvin Marr Albright (both of whom became well known painters, the latter under the professional name Zsissly), provided new models, and his subsequent canvases feature the growing boys posed in rural surroundings. From 1908 many of his finest works were painted during summers at the art colony in Brown County, Indiana, where Albright was the foremost figure painter.

Albright's popularity is reflected in his numerous exhibitions and in the extensive contemporary literature about him. No other Chicago artist's work was so widely exhibited at the Art Institute; during the first two decades of the present century, Albright enjoyed numerous solo shows there and at the museums in Detroit and Cincinnati. A constant flow of articles appeared about the artist and his work, all praising his innate sympathy with childhood and with the rural environment and referring to him as the "James Whitcomb Riley of the Brush."

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