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NOW ONLINE: See the latest reviews of Long Island shows

'Tile Club' laid side to side with Biennial

Two shows closely fitted

BY DEIDRE S. GREBEN
Special to Newsday

Along with black-eyed Susan and lavender salvia, easels are popping up across Long Island's picturesque terrain. It's plein-air painting season, and enthusiasts are on the hunt for the perfect vista.

Although William Merritt Chase founded the first U.S. academy for out-of-doors instruction on the western edge of Southampton Village in 1891, the Shinnecock Hills Summer School of Art was not the Impressionist painter's initial engagement with the region's sandy shores, wooded glens, bountiful gardens and fields.

More than a decade earlier, Chase and a dozen of his cohorts — Winslow Homer, John H. Twachtman, Augustus Saint-Gaudens and J. Alden Weir, among them — set out from Manhattan on expeditions to Long Island and up the Hudson River to sketch the scenic surroundings. They were members of the Tile Club, a network of artists who met weekly to socialize, discuss art and paint 8-by-8-inch Wedgwood and Mintons ceramic canvases.

"They wanted to participate in the decorative craze sweeping the country, a response to the craft and technical developments and archaeological discoveries showcased at the 1876 World's Fair," says Lisa Chalif, curator of the Heckscher Museum of Art, where "The Tile Club: Camaraderie and American Plein-Air Painting" opens Saturday and runs through Nov. 4.

Though organized by the Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, in cooperation with the Heckscher, more than half the 52 pieces on view draw from the Huntington museum's permanent collection, specifically holdings donated by the late curator and Long Island art expert Ronald Pisano and his partner, Fred Baker.



Winslow Homer's "Resting Shepherdess" of 1877 is one of the works on painted and glazed ceramic tile in the Heckscher's "Tile Club" exhibit.

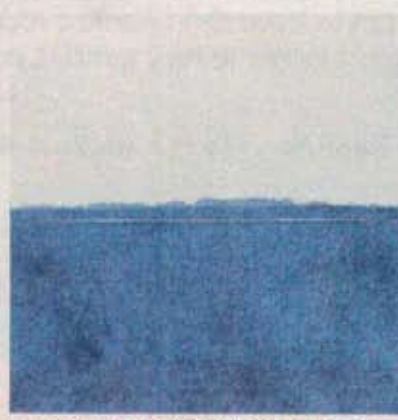


"Tile Club" includes William Merritt Chase's "A Subtle Device" (1881).

William Mackay Laffan, an agent for the Long Island Rail Road and a writer associated with the 19th century group (a few musicians were honorary members, too), secured the first passage out east for the tilers. Boarding the train to Babylon with art supplies and mosquito nets in tow, they continued by boat and made stops in coastal

communities, including Sayville, Bridgehampton and Montauk.

Along with the tiles, documentation of the artists' antics and activities are on display here, many of which were published in periodicals such as Harper's Weekly and Scribner's Monthly. "They worked to make Long Island a tourist destination," Chalif says



Bastienne Schmidt's "Horizon With Thread, From Grids and Threads" (2018) is being shown in the Biennial.

of the club's participants.

With a nod to Long Island's long-standing status as an artist refuge, the Heckscher also is showcasing more recent and wide-ranging examples of local talent in the fifth edition of its Long Island Biennial, running Saturday through Nov. 11. Boasting an unprecedented number of entries, the juried exhibition offers a

choice selection of work by area artists, from sculptor Arthur Bernstein's wood female torsos to mixed-media abstractions on canvas by Jane Breskin Zalben and Bastienne Schmidt.

In this complementary pairing of exhibitions, the Heckscher shows how Long Island continues to shape the American art landscape.

WHEN | WHERE

"The Tile Club," Saturday-Nov. 4 and the Long Island Biennial, Saturday-Nov. 11, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Ave., Huntington
INFO \$8, \$6 ages 62 and older, \$5 students 10 and older, and free younger than 10; 631-351-3250, heckscher.org

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BASTIENNE SCHMIDT