

MODERN MOVEMENT:

ARTHUR BOWEN DAVIES FIGURATIVE WORKS ON PAPER  
FROM THE RANDOLPH COLLEGE AND  
MAC COSGROVE-DAVIES COLLECTIONS

*and*

ARTHUR B. DAVIES

PAINTINGS FROM THE  
RANDOLPH COLLEGE COLLECTION

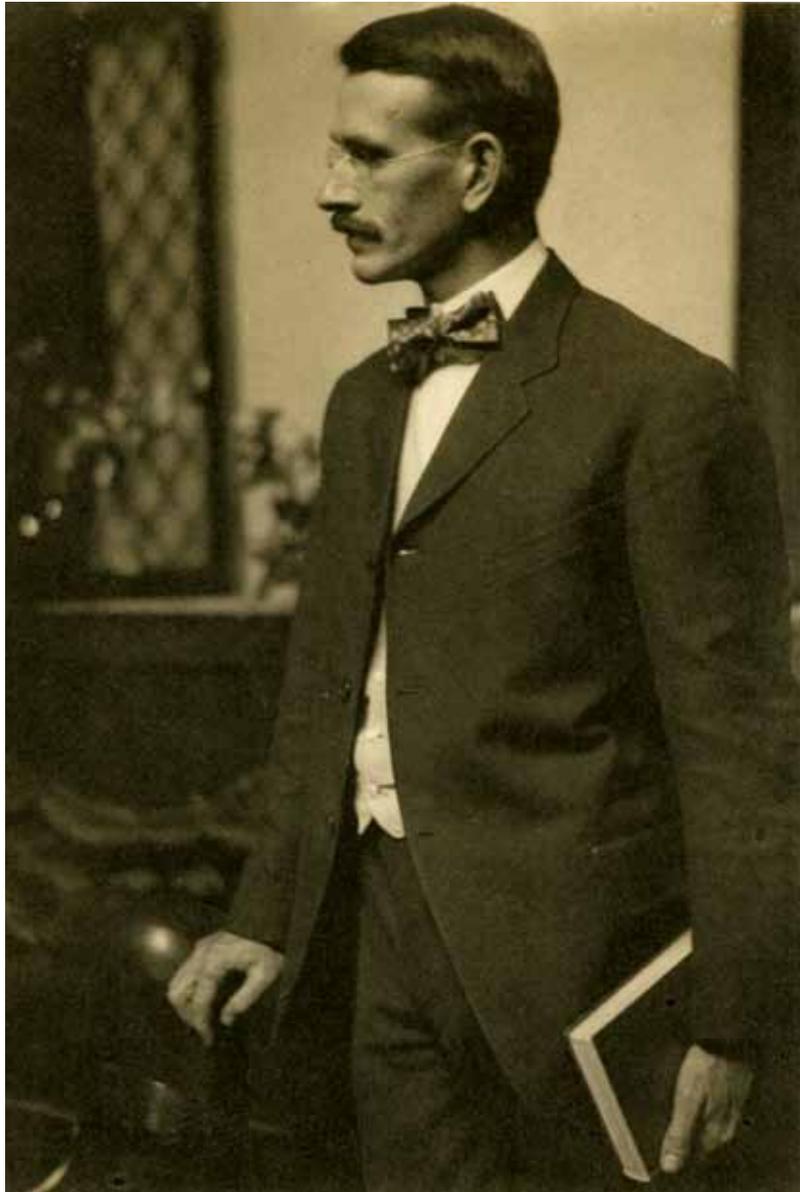


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January 18–April 14, 2013

Curated by  
Martha Kjeseth-Johnson and Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, ca. 1908. Gertrude Käsebier, photographer.

## INTRODUCTION

*Martha Kjeseth-Johnson, Director*

*Maier Museum of Art at Randolph College*

Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928) was an artist and primary curator of the groundbreaking Armory Show of 1913, credited with bringing modern art to American audiences. The Maier Museum of Art at Randolph College (formerly Randolph-Macon Woman's College) is home to sixty-one works by Davies, many of which have never been exhibited. Malcolm Cosgrove-Davies, great-grandson of Arthur B. Davies and owner of over 300 Davies pieces, has contributed a selection of works from his collection which will also be on view to the public for the first time. *Modern Movement: Arthur Bowen Davies Figurative Works on Paper from the Randolph College and Mac Cosgrove-Davies Collections* focuses on figurative works, many depicting dancers in various poses. We are pleased to present this exhibition on the centennial anniversary year of what was officially billed as *The International Exhibition of Modern Art* but commonly referred to as the Armory Show due to its location at New York's 69th Regiment Armory on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. That year the exhibition traveled to venues in Chicago and Boston as well.

Sometime in the mid-1890s, Davies began to sketch and paint images of dancers and would dwell on that subject until the end of his career. Our exhibition title, *Modern Movement*, suggests not only the illusion of movement within Davies' works, but also the wealth of modernist styles and ideas which debuted in the Armory Show. Undoubtedly that exhibition initiated a modern movement in the visual arts in the United States, and the individual largely responsible for selecting works and organizing gallery themes was Davies himself. Our exhibition title also serves as a reference to the modern dance movement that influenced Davies and his contemporaries. Isadora Duncan in particular was simpatico with Davies. The two shared a Hellenic adoration and, as Davies has been referred to as the father of modern art in America, Duncan has been called the mother of modern dance in America. While the Armory Show rocked the foundations of traditional visual art, Duncan's trailblazing approach to what was then called aesthetic barefoot dance, transformed the world of theatrical dance. The spring of 1913 would prove to be remarkable with both the Armory Show in New York, and the premiere of Ivor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) in Paris with choreography by the legendary ballet dancer, Vaslav Nijinsky. This performance was held at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, newly renovated with bas-reliefs depicting Duncan and Nijinsky, sculpted by French artist Emile-Antoine Bourdelle who considered them kindred spirits. Indeed, the two danced together in Paris and shared a similar aesthetic sensibility.

Most of the College's works by Davies were part of the largest and most important group of paintings received as a single gift. It came from Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr. (originally Zaidee C. Cobb and later Mrs. A. Conger Goodyear) in 1949 from the estate of her sister-in-law Lizzie (renamed "Lillie") Plummer Bliss, following the advice of Robert G. McIntyre, trustee of the estate and long-time president of the Macbeth Gallery. The forty-one works by Davies included five oil paintings, six watercolors, twelve drawings, and eighteen prints. Works by other artists were among the gift as well, including five paintings by Walt Kuhn. More Davies pieces were accessioned into the Collection later as gifts from Mrs. Goodyear and from members of the Macbeth family.<sup>1</sup>



PHOTO CREDIT: ANDREW WILDS

In the Maier's archives on November 9, 2012, Randolph College arts faculty and BFA colloquium students gather around Arthur B. Davies drawings for a discussion with Mac Cosgrove-Davies, great-grandson of Arthur B. Davies, and Lori Belilove, Artistic Director of The Isadora Duncan Dance Company & Foundation. Belilove is recognized worldwide as the premier interpreter and ambassador of Duncan's style.

Three years after the Bliss gift was received, the building that became the Maier Museum of Art was built and dedicated simply as "The Art Gallery." While the original, primary purpose of the building was to serve as a safe repository for the National Gallery of Art during the Cold War,<sup>2</sup> an entire study room was devoted to the Davies collection. Curators past have been tempted to stage what would be impressive Davies exhibitions; however, due to conservation concerns, only select pieces were handled and exhibited. The persistent obstacle was that much of the body of work was

in dire need of cleaning and restoration. Shortly after the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Karol Lawson, then director of the Maier, and Ellen Shaw Agnew, associate director at the time, determined to resolve the issues which compromised the works and hindered their potential for public viewing and appreciation. With support from the National Endowment for the Arts along with matching funds from the Maier Family Endowment, they embarked on a two-year conservation project with Holly Krueger and Lilly Steele in Alexandria, Virginia. In a phased effort between July 1, 2002, and June 30, 2004, twenty-two paintings and works on paper were treated.

A centerpiece of *Modern Movement* is a series of large-scale chalk drawings on black paper depicting dancers in the style of a Grecian frieze. These drawings were first exhibited in 1923, and included in the major exhibition of modern art staged by the Société Anonyme at the Brooklyn Museum in 1926. Many of Davies' peers considered these drawings the pinnacle of his career. Prior to conservation, *Constellations [I]* and *Constellations [II]* were inaccessible for viewing or study because of their extreme fragility. After careful examination, Krueger determined that *Mars and Venus* was beyond conventional repair. At the time, the unfortunate solution was a recommendation to let it remain in archival storage.<sup>3</sup> Even after the restoration project was completed, the potential for a major Davies exhibition waited in the wings, perhaps for the "right" moment. Enter Mac Cosgrove-Davies.

Mac Cosgrove-Davies first made contact with us in the autumn of 2011, acting on a tip from Sarah Cash, Bechhoefer Curator of American Art at the Corcoran since 1998 and director of the Maier prior to Dr. Lawson's tenure. She told Mac about the extensive Davies collection at the College, and at once he called us with an invitation to view his Davies works. We reciprocated, and during his visit to the Maier we agreed to collaborate on an exhibition to celebrate the Armory centennial year. Like his great-grandfather, Mac is an artist across media, including photography, book arts, and woodworking. We are delighted to include in *Modern Movement* his cyanotype entitled *Emma #3*, clearly inspired by Davies' *Supplication* images. Upon hearing that *Mars and Venus* was too disintegrated to repair, mat, and frame, Mac offered to build an archival viewing box in which to house it safely and aesthetically for exhibition. He finished that project with such efficiency and enthusiasm that in no time he was on to another. Mac explained in an email on September 18, 2012, "There will be a need for a stand or table to display the work. I am ready to build such a stand if needed, which sounds like a fun project. I am envisioning a design which can be disassembled for storage, would allow for horizontal or tilted viewing, and hopefully be somewhat versatile for other applications."

Throughout preparations for *Modern Movement*, Mac has inspired us with his curiosity, with his ability to attend to detail even in areas new to him, and with his devotion to preserving the creative gifts of his family heritage. We are grateful to him for being the driving force behind this exhibition, to his wife, Lisa, for her support and hospitality, and to Robin Veder with whom we were already acquainted as she communicated with us in 2008 while working on her article entitled, "Arthur B. Davies' Inhalation Theory of Art," published in *American Art* (a journal published by the University of Chicago Press for the Smithsonian American Art Museum) in 2009. Little did Robin know that she was the fulfillment of prophecy: Following the Bliss gift of 1949, William McIntyre remarked "Now anyone who wants to write about Davies will have to come to Lynchburg to do research."<sup>4</sup>

*Modern Movement* has required the efforts of all Maier staff members, including Danni Schreffler, Office Manager; Deborah Mallett Spanich, Registrar; and John Spanich, Museum Guard and Preparator. Randolph College's Pam Risenhoover, the Charles A. Dana Professor of Dance, has been a generous and ambitious collaborator, lending her enthusiasm and expertise to the dance content and programming inspired by the exhibition. We pay respects to past custodians of the collection at the College because the trail leads back, as is so often the case, to our first art professor, Louise Jordan Smith. For it was Harriet Fitzgerald, her student and protégé, accomplished artist and brilliant intellectual, who "happily stretched [Smith's] canvases" and who, as the embedded "Macon Woman" in New York City, formed and solidified friendships with some of the most important art dealers of the twentieth century, including Alfred Stieglitz and William MacIntyre. Surely it was Fitzgerald's efforts which led MacIntyre to consider R-MWC a worthy recipient of worthy artwork. Ultimately it was the Bliss women, both Lillie and Zaidee, whose decisions created a home for so many Davies works at the College, for the benefit of our students, for Davies scholars from other institutions, and for all of our visitors.



PHOTO CREDIT: ANDREW WILDS

Belilove identifies and demonstrates for Randolph College students signature Duncan poses found in Davies' drawing, *Mars and Venus*.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Mary Frances Williams, *Catalogue of the Collection of American Art at Randolph-Macon Woman's College: A Selection of Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, second edition 1977), 9.
- 2 Karol Lawson, Ph.D., "Project Y: An Art Gallery for Randolph-Macon Woman's College," *Lynch's Ferry Magazine*, Fall 2002.
- 3 Holly Krueger, letter to Ellen S. Agnew, 2 September 2003, Maier Museum of Art at Randolph College archives (Lynchburg, VA).
- 4 Harriet Fitzgerald, "The R-MWC Collection of Art: Recollections," *Randolph-Macon Woman's College Alumnae Bulletin* 76 (Spring 1983), 14.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

*Mac Cosgrove–Davies*

Arthur B. Davies has been part of my life from my earliest memories. His artwork graced my childhood home, and my father and other Davies relatives discussed him through a familial lens. Growing up, he was a distant ancestor whom I never met and, until I learned more in my adulthood, just a painter whose fame had faded. Some of his works, such as the watercolors, were easily accessible, and I had no difficulty appreciating them. Others, especially his oils, were impenetrable to my childhood psyche. They first attracted my attention when I came to realize that those were naked women in the painting on the living room wall. More than that, they were entirely at ease, and innocently unconcerned with their natural exposure. As an awakening adolescent, I seriously considered whether I was born in the wrong place and time. I wanted to be in that picture!



Lisa and Mac Cosgrove-Davies, Bangladesh, 2010

Later, I developed an appreciation for my cultural, historical, and ancestral coordinates. I also understood that Davies' poetic images are not a chronicle of his time and travels, but instead sprang from his dreams, emotions, intellect, and imagination. Over time, my appreciation, as well as my curiosity, have grown for this man, his life, and his work.

With time I have also learned to value the importance of listening to my inner voice. This not only fuels my own artistic efforts, but also led me to undertake the substantial – and unfinished – effort of conserving what had been my family's rather poorly archived Davies collection. This effort naturally gave rise to an urge to share them. I found a ready audience in the curators of our "local" museums. These included the Smithsonian American Art Museum, National Gallery of Art, Phillips Collection, Corcoran Gallery, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Freer Gallery of Art, Delaware Art Museum, and the Maier Museum of Art at Randolph College. I freely confess that I did not know where this was heading, but it surely resonated as the right thing to do and has been richly rewarding. Little did I know how little I knew!

I am thankful for each of my museum and academic guests – now friends – who have generously shared their knowledge and passions. Their expertise has covered an astonishing range, including: aesthetic appreciation; archival practices; art history; artistic theory, practice and technique (including oil, watercolor, drawing, pastels, printing, etc.); body culture; cultural history; framing craft and lore; as well as personal connections with the artwork. Without exception, these new friends have also been engaging, gracious, and stimulating company, and I look forward to more such sessions – both repeat visits and new friends. I am especially thankful to Martha Kjeseth Johnson and Deborah Mallett Spanich of the Maier Museum for taking on the challenge of this show, which has been an inspiration unto itself.

Having now tapped most of the curators within a day's drive of Washington, I'm setting my sights on the academic community, in the hopes of helping to stimulate new scholarship on Davies's under-examined, but fascinating, chapter in art history. We are also hoping that some aspiring biographer will consider exploring the life of his intriguing wife Lucy Virginia Meriwether, a descendant of Meriwether Lewis, who made history as one of America's first female medical doctors. This remarkable woman shot her first husband with his own gun in self-defense, later married an artist who would become prominent and influential (Davies), delivered more than 6,000 babies in rural New York, operated a farm, and raised a family. Her colorful history surely will make for interesting reading.

My primary inspiration for targeting the academic community is my friend Robin Veder, whose brilliant and intriguing research, matched with her lively, engaging manner have opened my eyes to new ways of seeing my great grandfather's artwork. Unlike his Ashcan School contemporaries, Davies' works are not a window in time through which we see a snippet of our forebear's lives and culture. Instead, we must use the sensibilities, theories, historical context, and overall worldview of his time to find clues to his work. What I had at one time considered outmoded and inaccessible anachronisms are now becoming aesthetic, symbolic, and emotional puzzles which, viewed with both intuition and intellect, are starting to offer glimpses through the fog.

For example, Davies was apparently aware of Eadweard Muybridge's motion studies, and surely knew of painters such as Duchamp who sought to convey motion on a static surface. However, there were not yet fixed cultural expectations on how to depict motion, despite these new developments. Davies' early-twentieth-century efforts to depict motion on paper, some of which today appear quaint or perhaps overly poetic, can therefore be seen through his contemporary culture as true and earnest experiments rooted in his time. These spiritually infused works suggest more than just physical motion. It is not just a person moving through space; the soul is also transported. Although history suggests that Davies' efforts were not trend-setting, they may well have appealed to his contemporaries as cutting-edge-modern.

As suggested by Robin, Davies' deep theoretical and intuitive appreciation of contemporary movement, dance, and exercise have found voice in his art, through his unique blend of the nude, landscape, contemporary culture, classical idealism, and imagination. To me this voice speaks in an unknown language. However, since reliable translations are unavailable, the door is open wide to speculation – an appealing pursuit for the discerning mind and perhaps what Davies was hoping for. Indeed, my reading of his contemporary critics suggests that they also were left to their own devices in reacting to his works, since Davies himself provided precious little guidance or explanation. Hence it is no surprise that today, outside of his cultural and historical context, his work presents even more of a puzzle.

I surely have not cracked the code, and I still can't help but smile sometimes at his poetic sincerity and the Arcadian titles among his works. Even so, at other times I think I may have caught faint glimmers of what he was about, and perhaps these could be a few small steps on the path to understanding my great grandfather's works. For the rest, the mystery still remains . . . and I like it that way.



Fig. 1. Arthur B. Davies,  
American, 1862-1928  
*Potentia*, 1913,  
oil on canvas  
43 x 21 in.  
Indiana University Art  
Museum 80.37  
Photography by:  
Michael Cavanagh and  
Kevin Montague

## MODERN MOTIVES: ARTHUR B. DAVIES, ‘CONTINUOUS COMPOSITION,’ AND EFFICIENT AESTHETICS

*Robin Veder, Ph.D.*

Although Arthur B. Davies is well known for his role in organizing the landmark 1913 Armory Show, which was the first major international exhibition of modern art in the United States, his own artistic production has long presented a conundrum. In the early 1900s, artists, critics, collectors, historians, and museum and gallery directors praised Davies’s artwork, finding it visionary. He had several major one-man shows, culminating in the 1930 memorial retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Yet in the last seventy-five years, many have found Davies’s frequent depiction of nudes “baffling” and “peculiar” in pose and in mere presence, because they seem to contradict his commitment to avant-garde art. According to various historians’ accounts, he was one of the antimodern “holy men in retreat” from materialism – the down-to-earth reality of daily life besmirched by the market-driven character of the western world at the turn of the century. He has also been described as a protomodernist symbolist, and an early modernist painter of abstract, structured decorative designs.<sup>1</sup> He was one of the first American artists to experiment with new approaches to abstraction, which turned attention away from art’s narrative function and toward the distortion and emphasis of formal qualities such as color, line, light, and shape. In Davies’s work, this change is most evident in a series of canvases and prints concentrated between 1913 and 1916 (figs. 1-2). When these works failed to appeal to his regular clients and usual admirers, he reverted to the style characteristic of his pre-Armory Show oeuvre (an artist’s overall body of work). This return to an apparently pastoral subject matter and classicized, frieze-like disposition of nude figures has often been interpreted as an antimodern impulse. The appearance of Davies’s painting *Unicorns: Legend, Sea Calm* (c.1906) on the cover of T. J. Jackson Lears’s study *No Place for Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (1981) cemented the artist’s antimodernist reputation.<sup>2</sup>

Surprisingly, then, Davies’s figures are a particularly promising site for exploring his modernist aesthetic. His compositional arrangements show a modernist’s eye for the formal qualities of line and pattern, and the models’ poses demonstrate a physical sensibility particular to the early 1900s. Gesturing figures populate hundreds of Davies’s works of art, in stylistically diverse drawings, paintings, prints, and sculptures in wood and bronze. Only the bodies are consistent, reappearing over decades with the same postures, gestures, and emotionally detached facial expressions to create a recognizable style. Davies’s working methods lent themselves to this homogeneity, and to the difficulty of firmly dating his work or dividing it into definite sequential periods. He made “some thousand drawings – chalk on red paper” of his models, recalled his dealer Frederic Newlin Price. After making “eight or ten in a morning,” another contemporary noted, Davies then imported the figures from the sketches into paintings, prints, and sculpture. He rarely dated his artworks, and his



Fig. 2. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Potentia*, 1920, aquatint on paper, 4  $\frac{3}{16}$  x 10  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

model and gallery dealer both reported that he altered paintings by inserting figures into landscapes, even years after completing the original picture.<sup>3</sup> An understanding of the repetitive nature of Davies's work, and how it simultaneously and efficiently served his aesthetic and economic goals, can illuminate the art displayed by the Maier Museum in this exhibition, *Modern Movement: Arthur Bowen Davies Works on Paper from the Randolph College and Mac Cosgrove-Davies Collections*.

The artist left little written documentation that clearly states his intentions for why his art looks the way it does. To interpret his imagery, historians have turned regularly to a statement that Davies posted to explain a public room of murals he painted in 1926. A key phrase reads: "I use the method of 'continuous composition' – repetition of the same motive. It is a subjective realization by inspiration of a way used by the early Christian artist to preserve his original spontaneous subjectivity and oneness – otherwise knowledge would flow from without inward and Reason would impair the process of Love and Beauty."<sup>4</sup> Of this "Credo," even sympathetic biographer Bennard B. Perlman admitted, "It is questionable whether this accomplished the desired effect of clarification."<sup>5</sup> To readers today, there may be nothing questionable about the explanatory statement as it appears impenetrable. In this essay, I suggest that when we examine the visual and philosophical sources that Davies drew upon, and the period and context in which he wrote this creed, certain words provide portals of clarity.

A variety of possible meanings of "motive" and "continuous composition" in Davies's "Credo" relate to an early-twentieth-century modernist aesthetic agenda. In the early twentieth-century, the word "motive" was associated with "motor force," that which initiates movement, be it mental thought or physical force, external or internal. The "motive" force meant muscular bodily movement

as well as our current sense of the word, which usually indicates the psychological desires and fears that move one to act. For artists, a “motive” might be the quality of a subject that enables it to stir the artist’s feelings and prompt him to respond by making a painting about either the subject or the feelings. Aestheticians proposed that viewers experience subtle empathetic “motor” feelings in response to art. In musical, literary, and visual compositions, by the late nineteenth century “motive,” or the increasingly common derivative “motif,” had also come to signify a repeated element that reappears throughout a single work or series of works. In music, the motif may be melodic or rhythmic, and in the visual arts, it may be repeated subject matter or formal elements (such as line or color). By setting tone and creating pattern, a motive unified the composition and could establish a mood.<sup>6</sup> Thus a motive/motif could be the artist’s external subject, the quality of the subject that generated the artist’s bodily movement, the repeated manifestation of that element (subject or quality) in a work of art, and the aesthetic experience it created for the viewer.

With that breadth in mind, this essay explores four possible meanings of the key sentence in Davies’s “Credo”: “I use the method of ‘continuous composition’ – repetition of the same motive.” First to be considered are “Body Cultures in Motion”: representations of figures that appear to be performing early-twentieth-century modern dance and physical fitness movements. The second section concerns “Formal Rhythmic Motifs” that unify complex compositions, and the third explores how the repetition of these motifs across multiple works served both “Aesthetic and Economic Productivity.” In the fourth and final section, “Continuous Composition and *Durchkomponiert*,” I offer a new interpretation of Davies’s “Credo” by linking his ideas to composer Richard Wagner’s goal of stimulating viewers’ psycho-physiological sensations of movement. Throughout, I argue that repetition conserves energy in a manner that makes Davies’ approach an aesthetics of efficiency.

## BODY CULTURES IN MOTION

In the visual arts, a “continuous composition” or “continuous representation” has come to mean a “pictorial narrative featuring two or more successive actions from the same story within one setting. A character may, therefore, appear more than once in the same painting or sculpture.”<sup>7</sup> Consistently taken in this sense, historians have understood “continuous composition – repetition of the same motive” to mean Davies’s technique of visualizing figures in successive poses. In compositions like *Maya*, *Mirror of Illusions*, the bodies Davies paints come to life across a single frame through a technique that simultaneously contributed to his visual modernism. Davies’s paintings seem cinematic and futurist, showing the passage of time through a figure’s change of motion within a single frame.<sup>8</sup>

*Maya* is one of several pictures that reference the flat, processional quality of classical friezes, with nude and lightly draped figures set close to the picture plane in idyllic natural settings. In these



Fig. 3. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Maya, Mirror of Illusions*, ca.1910  
oil on canvas  
26 7/8 x 40 1/8 in.  
Courtesy of Friends of American Art Collection,  
1910.318, The Art Institute of Chicago

Fig. 4. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Mirror of Illusion*, 1920  
drypoint on paper  
6 3/8 x 8 7/16 in.  
Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



images, the figures' postures and gestures seem to allude to spiritual and emotional states. The nudes, Arcadian landscapes, and Davies's mystical titles offer themselves as antimodern mythological and metaphysical narratives that romantically and perhaps psychoanalytically fuse the female body with nature. Of *Maya, Mirror of Illusions* (figs. 3 - 4) and other works from 1908 to 1914, Elizabeth Sussman offered this assessment: "[H]is deepest impulse was to distill a vision of an imagined Golden Age through the crucible of the non-narrative elements of rhythm and gesture – a *modern* image of the past [my emphasis]."<sup>9</sup> Part of what makes it modern is the implication of movement, and another is the possibility that the movements themselves were particular to body cultures of the period.

The impression that Davies's figures strike a sequence of poses performed by a single figure in successive positions evokes Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) and Eadweard Muybridge's photographic motion studies, visual imagery that Davies knew well. It is a sign of Davies's modernism that his repetitions and patterns also bear a resemblance to photographic labor-efficiency studies. Many of his frieze paintings and drawings in particular seem to break down body movement into discrete, static moments and then invite the viewer to reanimate the body through visual imagination, just as the new technology of film turned a series of static frames into a fluid simulation of life. Many of Davies's works, in multiple formats, appear to represent one or more figures performing actions in this sense, although as Marc Simpson has rightly noticed, Davies often introduces discordant elements, such as the individualized heads and mirror in *Maya*. However, the non-pedestrian poses – oddly tilted hands and heads and tangled limbs – lead one to ask the schematic question: *what* are they doing?

Davies represented figures in postures and gestures taken from dance, rhythmic gymnastics, and strengthening exercises for decades, and a cinematic reading re-animates exercise and dance practices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, if *Maya* is read as the actions of one figure, the sequence would make sense as an example of a Dalcroze 5/4 rhythmic gymnastics sequence, in which the dancer takes a series of oppositions (right/left, up/down, in/out) to mark each beat, five with the arms and four with the legs, which Davies punctuates with a rest at the end.<sup>10</sup> The continuous composition of Davies's *Maya*, *The South's Breath* (ca. 1920), *Sweet Tremulous Leaves* (1922-23), and other figure studies completed over several years convey a particularly modern sense of bodily movement because Davies creates filmic sequences of actions that were popular in the physical culture and dance of his period.

Davies began to paint dancers even earlier, in the mid-1890s, notably juxtaposing the muscular and lyrical, male and female in the early work *Athlete and Dancer* (ca. 1895-97). He admired Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Lōie Fuller, attending their performances and collecting photos of them whenever possible. Price recalled the inspiration Davies drew from "Isadora Duncan dancing, – attending her performance, drawing late in the night hundreds of sketches. These were his inventory artistic . . ." (fig. 5). The artist also worked from dance photos, recruited dancers as his



Fig. 5. Isadora Duncan, ca. 1905, photo credit: Elvira  
Photo courtesy of The Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation,  
New York, NY

models and paid for them to have dance training.<sup>11</sup> He titled more than a few works with references to dance, both explicitly (as above) and more subtly in titles such as *Do Reverence* (fig. 6), which refers to the practice of taking bows and curtsies to acknowledge an audience or give thanks to the ballet master and pianist at the end of a class. One pays “due reverence,” but the action itself, in colloquial English, is to “do reverence,” to perform the sequence of movements known in ballet as “reverence.”

Another modern body-culture practice that informs Davies’ figures reveals itself in his theory of breath. In the early 1920s, when he returned to the frieze-format drawings, he also presented a theory that all arts, ancient and modern, figurative and decorative, were only vital to the degree that they expressed the process of inhaling. For him, the “lift of inhalation” was the unwritten secret of ancient art, the answer to the question of “how to represent life in action.” He argued that it was present in all great art, and he aspired to make it a central element of his own. Precisely what it looked like is a matter open to debate, in part because to those who understood it, “the figures, as well as the landscape as a whole with its trees, possess the quality of life and that uplift which results from the inhalation of air”; this quote was a description of *A Day of Good Fortune* (fig. 7).<sup>12</sup> One possibility is that it referred to modern breathing exercises, such as the stretches performed by the third and fifth figure (reading left to right) in his chalk drawing titled *Inhalation Theory Study* (fig. 8).

Davies’s inhalation theory was most clearly articulated in writings by archaeologist Gustavus Eisen, especially his book *The Great Chalice of Antioch* (1923). Eisen credited Davies for bringing out breathing’s artistic relevance after nineteenth-century Swedish physical education reformer and gymnast Per Henrik Ling, dancers Isadora Duncan and Elise Dufour, and Davies’s model (and second wife in a bigamous arrangement unknown to his first) Edna Potter Owen rediscovered and demonstrated the lift of inhalation in body-culture contexts. While explaining



Fig. 6. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Sketch for Do Reverence*, 1912  
chalk on paper  
16 1/6 x 4 1/2 in.  
Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

the “lift of inhalation” seen in the “Greek pose,” Eisen wrote: “The great pioneer in the artistic and rhythmic dance seems to have been the well known Isadora Duncan who, unconsciously perhaps, as far as the writer knows, effected the Greek pose in dance by the use of the anterior emotional center. Those who have seen her art must recognize that she appears to glide through space supported and guided by the anterior part of the chest.” Conscientious breathing, movements led by the upper chest, and the idea of energy in the solar plexus moving out into – and *motivating* – the limbs were essential to Duncan’s philosophy and aesthetic program as well.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in addition to providing inspirational poses, Duncan may have been a philosophical source for Davies as well.

To fully comprehend what makes the apparent movements of Davies’s figures consistent with modern body cultures, and not just in the sense of Duncan’s break with the rigid torso and isolated movements of classical ballet, it is important to recognize the influence of additional personalities, such as Davies’s own breathing instructor Bess Mensendieck. At some point in the late 1910s, Davies began practicing Mensendieck’s Delsarte-influenced, nude breathing calisthenics as a treatment for his angina.<sup>14</sup> She can be seen demonstrating her own “lift of inhalation” in photographs from earlier in her career (fig. 9). In this photographic demonstration, the heavy head, sunken chest, and pot belly of the “before” photo are contrasted with an “after” photo in which Mensendieck’s bright eye, alert head, uplifted convex chest, and firm limbs present the taut energy achieved after three months of exercise. So many of Davies’s female figures have this literal “lift of inhalation,” in fact, that pronounced busts are a visual motif in his work.

Duncan, Mensendieck, and others connected to the artist, his models, and his audiences were part of a broad range of body cultures offering related and contrasting corporeal responses to modernity. “Body cultures” are historically specific physical practices and ideas that shape how bodies should look, feel, work, and move. The multifaceted body cultures emerging in the United States

Fig. 7. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Day of Good Fortune*, ca. 1914  
oil on canvas  
18 x 30 in.  
Courtesy of Whitney Museum of  
American Art, Gift of Mr. and  
Mrs. Arthur G. Altschul, 1971  
Photograph by Geoffrey Clements

Fig. 8. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Inhalation Theory Study*, n.d.  
white chalk on black paper  
20 ¼ x 36 in.  
Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery  
LLC, New York



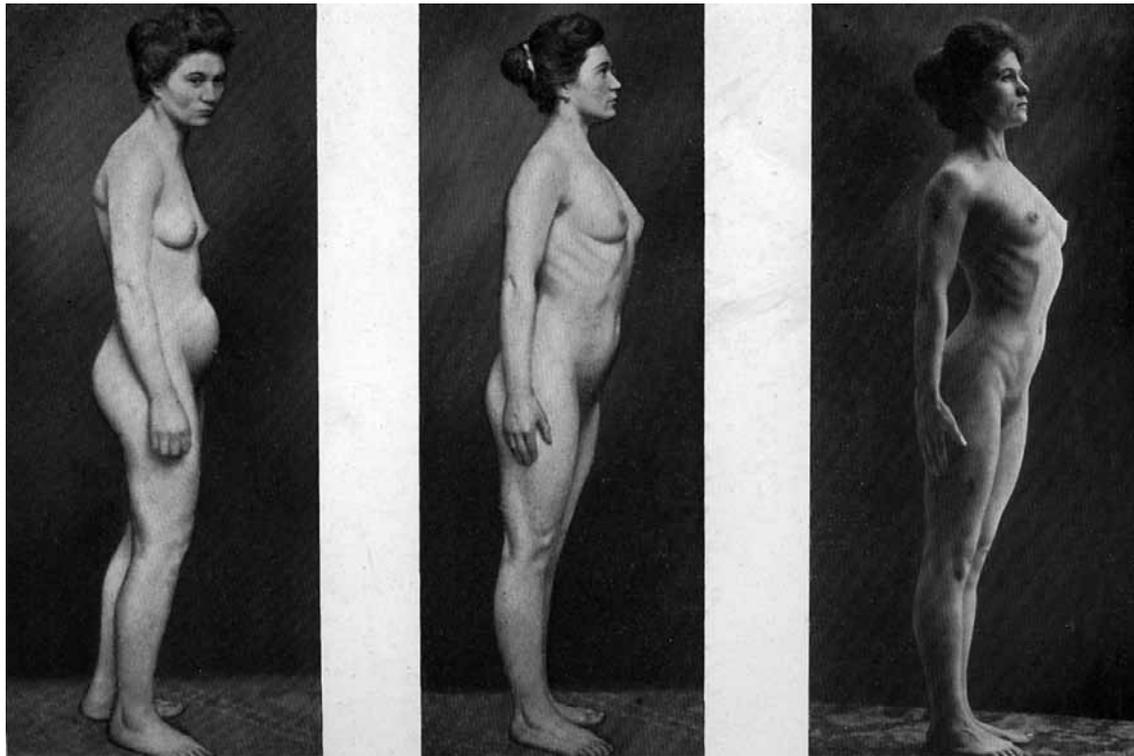


Fig. 9. Photographer unknown, Series of 3 photographs from Bess M. Mensendieck, *Körperkultur der Frau: Praktisch Hygenische und Praktisch Ästhetische Winke* (Munich: Bei. F. Bruckmann A.-G., 1912)

and Europe in this period were connected through the fields of sport, dance, fashion, medicine, and technology, and were determined by the needs, interests, and places of their making. Collectively, they crafted and visualized a “modern” body, ready for work, play, and individual self-expression. The positions and implied movements of Davies’s figures correspond to a variety of body-culture practices recorded in early-twentieth-century exercise books and films released in Europe and the United States. A shared concern throughout was the cultivation of efficient physiological alignment and movement rhythms that conserved bodily energy.

Body cultures of the modern workplace were also important sources for modernist imagery, and modern artists’ ideas about their own energy expenditure. In this period, photographers Muybridge (mentioned above), Étienne-Jules Marey, and Frank and Lillian Gilbreth documented workers’ movements; their studies helped industrialists to design assembly lines and to train laborers to move in time with the manufacturing process. When industrialists conducted time-motion studies, their primary concern was to adjust work process and human and machine technologies to ensure the greatest productive output with minimum energy expenditure.<sup>15</sup> Although dancers’ and visual artists’ desired outcomes differed from that of industrial capitalists, they shared an ethic of conserving and maximizing physiological energy.

For Arthur B. Davies, repetition facilitated physiological, economic, and aesthetic efficiency. By using only a few models and repeatedly drawing the same poses and then inserting them as building blocks in other works, he had become intimately familiar with their decorative potential, and kinesthetically accomplished at repeating them with ease. Davies’s preferred poses, working techniques, and the confident draftsmanship he developed brings us to the question of how

to reconcile the apparently discordant combination of seemingly classical content, his “lift of inhalation” theory of embodied art, and the suggestion of visually abstract rhythmic patterns created by his compositional arrangement of figures. He reduced and purified the forms by eliminating backgrounds, subtracting color, and codifying the unconventional postures and gestural vocabulary of his figures such that they became identifiable motifs/motives. His double motive (in the sense of desire) – to create non-narrative visual patterns and to give breath to two-dimensional figures – has troubled Davies’s critics and historians, as has the evidence that his repetition served commercial motives. And yet, as I will show, all of these motives can be conceptually united within Davies’s aesthetic goal of using motif to efficiently achieve continuous composition. I suggest that in this sense, not only the appearance but also the values of modern body cultures have a counterpart in Davies’s “Credo.”

## FORMAL RHYTHMIC MOTIFS

According to Joseph Czestochowski, who has looked at hundreds of Davies’s prints and paintings during his project to document and catalogue them, “continuous composition” is very much like the idea of “parallelism” that was articulated by Swiss symbolist painter Ferdinand Hodler, one of Davies’s contemporaries and a likely inspiration. Hodler argued that in the aesthetic quality of parallelism, “repetition always acts to increase intensity” whether pleasing or painful, and whether found in experience or in the formal composition of a work of art. While walking in a pine woods, seeing the “countless columns” of tree trunks against a clear sky produced for Hodler a sense of order and unity. It is important to note that for Hodler, “Parallelism can be pointed out in the different parts of a single object, looked at alone; it is even more obvious when one puts several objects of the same kind next to each other.” Thus, Hodler’s parallelism is the effect of simultaneous repetition, seeing the same element several times at once, whether it is the same form repeated (even



Fig. 10. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Recurrence*, 1921  
lithograph on paper  
12  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 15  $\frac{1}{16}$  in.  
Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Fig. 11. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Constellations [III]*, ca. 1922-23, chalk on paper, 22  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 49  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

with variations) in one object (fig. 10) or the same element repeated in multiple objects that are then displayed together (as they would be at an exhibition or in a private collection of Davies's art). In Davies's art, when a single composition includes such variations on a pose and/or the same pose as seen from multiple angles, for example in *Maya, Mirror of Illusions* (fig. 3), it serves a formal purpose by creating this visual effect of "parallelism."<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the repetition of figures arranged into patterns in various media and throughout Davies's body of work amplifies their effects. From the perspective of Hodler's parallelism and other aesthetic theories that linked the repetition of visual stimulus to physical movement to aesthetic experience, Davies's repeated figures, seen en masse, would have intensified their power for viewers, a point I pursue later in this essay.

Davies often treats the body abstractly by removing indications of human interaction or placement in a three-dimensional space. Detached from individual personalities or narratives, heads, torsos, and limbs provide convenient patterns for the artist to assemble into a visual rhythm. Repeated lines and patterns abound in *Maya*. Five female figures are each reflected in the large mirror that fills most of the picture plane. The vertical lines of their doubled bodies, seen from two angles, are complemented by the horizontal repetition of the mountain range reflected in a still lake. The undulating horizon line harmonizes with the silhouettes of the figures' heads. Seen in this context of visual reiteration, the depicted bodies may be only an organizational device for line, creating recognizable patterns.<sup>17</sup>

In the early 1920s, Davies returned to the frieze-like compositions seen in earlier works such as *Maya* with a series of white-on-black drawings in an elongated horizontal format. At the time, and even after his death, critics and collectors considered this series of frieze drawings to be a high point in his career and more broadly, in the range of dance-related modern art produced in the 1910s and 1920s. The theme of dance in modern art typically "holds the spotlight" and thus overshadows and overwhelms any weak visual artistic representations, critic Edward Alden Jewell wrote in his *New York*



Fig. 12. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Constellations [I]*, ca. 1922-23, chalk on paper, 21 ¾ in. x 49 ¼ in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

*Times* review of the College Art Association's 1933 exhibition on this theme. He continued: "There are exceptions, however – for instance, the beautiful white-on-black chalk drawing by Arthur B. Davies." These drawings, originally exhibited at the Montross Gallery in 1923, were well-received from the start.<sup>18</sup>

"In his very latest phase," wrote modern-art collector Duncan Phillips in 1924, "drawings in white chalk on black paper, the figures have returned to nature and to the Greek ideal of bodily perfection. Mannerisms have disappeared and, in such drawings as the one entitled 'Constellations,' there is a sublime sense of coördinate rhythm, a universal quality which transcends the personal charm" (fig. 11). This white-on-black series, he continued, was marked by Davies's desire to simultaneously accomplish "decorative experiments in the disposition of many figures all over a given space" such that the coordination of parts to the whole, whether line, color, light, or form, would form together a "dynamic spark" and "creat[e] patterns whereby abstract emotions may be mysteriously aroused. Obviously if he *achieves* all this he will be among the Olympians of Art."<sup>19</sup>

Bryson Burroughs, the conservative curator of painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, disagreed about the figures but concurred that the compositions themselves were stimulating. Burroughs felt that the figures in Davies's white-on-black drawings – like *Constellations [I]* (fig. 12), *Constellations [II]*, and *Inhalation Theory Study* (fig. 8) "were entirely removed from humanity and had no function except the decorative function in his designs. Expressively they might as well, to my mind, have been plants or any inanimate object, though there was a fine exhilaration in the decorative pattern."<sup>20</sup>

A formalist argument such as Burroughs's gains traction when we consider that Davies used a grid of diagonal lines to create formal coherence. This was the Maratta System, and by April 1914, Davies's use of the system was sufficiently known that a review of Hardesty Maratta's work

was prefaced with this statement: “In our day Mr. Arthur B. Davies who, most of all our painters, is admired for the harmony and rhythm of his composition, has been most benefitted by the Maratta system of proportions and of color.” Maratta made it easy by providing a grid that artists could put under tracing paper while developing visual compositions that they could transfer to other media later.<sup>21</sup> Maratta’s gridded arrangement of elements is more easily seen in Davies’s white-on-black drawings than in his paintings, particularly because there he eliminates color, then flattens, and usually isolates the figures in space. By streamlining, in this sense, these visual patterns of organized bodies become more definite and powerful. Unlike *Maya* and *Constellations [II]*, in *Constellations [I]*, the figures are not all located in the same spatial reality, but implied lines unify the composition. For instance, implied lines lead the eye to connect an outstretched arm in the upper left corner to the angled legs of an adjacent figure, and then to see parallel diagonal lines in the legs of two figures on the far right. The same is true in *Inhalation Theory Study*, but there Davies extends actual lines into implied lines by locating eye-catching nodes, such as the tip of a figure’s toes or figures, along a traceable trajectory.

My descriptions of formal rhythmic motifs in *Maya*, *Mirror of Illusions* and *Constellations [I]* and *[II]* may suggest that they are purely formal and decorative modernist compositions. If their titles indicate a meaning, it is expressive but predominantly non-narrative, corresponding to a symbolist aesthetic. A useful parallel here, an artist to whom Davies is often compared, is Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, the French painter whose style similarly mixed classical imagery, esoteric symbolism, and modernist forms. In response to the question that Jennifer Shaw asks of Puvis and I ask of Davies – What are those bodies doing? – the answer may be that both artists were playing with form. The repeated angles of bowed arms and bent legs and the correspondences between figures that mirror one another and the landscape around them constitute patterns of repeated negative spaces and positive forms. Certain postures frequently seen in Davies’s works provide a chorus of shapes, such as the triangle of an arm held akimbo.<sup>22</sup> These lines, in addition to the physical poses they depict, are also the motifs/motives that Davies repeats in order to construct a “continuous composition.” Following Hodler’s description of “parallelism,” this appears to be true of most of the last two decades of Davies’s life, the figures and their relative placements crossing multiple styles and materials.

## AESTHETIC AND ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY

Iconography, schemata, rehearsal, problem-solving, obsession, the return of the repressed, commercial uniformity, lack of creativity, destruction or re-inscription of aura, and forgery: all are ways that art historians have thought about repetition. Repetition within a single work can be a representational, formal, or symbolic choice. That applies to repeated motifs/motives that appear in several different works as well. In this section of the essay, I explore the possibility that after 1900 Davies’s entire body of work progressively merges into a “continuous composition.” Davies’s

repetitions across works can be seen in specific contour lines, gestures, full-body poses, and figure clusters. Repeated groupings appear in several works, indicating that Davies found a desirable harmony in a particular combination of poses. By repeating his motifs/motives, he maintained a coherent aesthetic program dominated by his own particular perspective, which in the Credo he described as the goal of “continuous composition”: “It is a subjective realization by inspiration of a way [lift of inhalation] used by the early Christian artist [as described in *The Great Chalice of Antioch*] to preserve his original spontaneous subjectivity and oneness – otherwise knowledge would flow from without inward and Reason would impair the process of Love and Beauty.” I would like to suggest that in the post-Armory-Show years Davies realized how an aesthetic program of moderate abstraction could be a good compromise between his peripatetic stylistic inclinations and the relative conservatism of the market for contemporary American art. The repetition of a set stable of figure drawings provided a structure that was safe conceptually, financially, and for the “preserv[ation of] his original spontaneous subjectivity.”<sup>23</sup>

Inspired by the abstract movements that he saw in Europe and then brought to the United States for the groundbreaking Armory Show in 1913, Davies gave his figures a new fragmented look in large canvases that closely resemble the Puteaux, Orphic, and Synchronist branches of cubism. The first two styles were well represented at the Armory Show. Davies’s earliest experiments, such as *Potentia* (fig. 1), take after Jacques Villon’s Puteaux paintings seen there, including *Arbres en fleurs* (also known as *Flowering Trees, Puteaux*), which Davies bought and hung in his studio.<sup>24</sup> Although Davies’s works from this period have captured lasting interest (in contrast to many other canvases and prints that languish in storage vaults), they were not well received at the time. Model Wreath McIntyre recalled Davies painting “quite a few [abstract] things the first year I was there (1914). I thought they were beautiful but he did not feel it had much of a future.”<sup>25</sup>

Most of Davies’s critics and collectors didn’t like them. Washington, D.C. art collector Duncan Phillips, one of Davies’s top supporters, urged the artist to abandon his experiments. They were “sheer perversity,” “madness,” “his winsome world of make-believe broken to bits as if at the whim of a sick, petulant child.”<sup>26</sup> He and other regular patrons preferred either his very early work, mostly from the 1890s, which looked like a pastoral version of Albert Pinkham Ryder, or even better, his mid-career classical themes of ancient Greek mythology depicted by nudes in natural landscapes, such as the painting *Hesitation of Orestes* (fig. 13). Phillips later called that painting the “commanding peak” of Davies’s “brilliant career.”<sup>27</sup> Within five years, Davies had set aside his experiments with fragmented and flattened planes and kaleidoscopic color treatments, and followers of Davies’s earlier work were relieved to see him set aside abstract experiments like *Potentia*. Art collector and critic Leo Stein (the anti-cubist brother of poet/collector Gertrude Stein) reviewed the Davies retrospective hosted by the Macbeth Gallery in January 1918, noting he was pleased to see that the “latest things are sensitive and fluent drawings, with hardly more than traces of cubistic innovation.” This exhibition showed audiences that Davies had returned to the more conventional treatment

and overtly mystical subjects of his past in works like *Dweller on the Threshold*, which another reviewer described as “Davies’ mysticism in full bloom, a fine specimen of an art as personal as handwriting.”<sup>28</sup>

When Davies started this experimental period, evidently he was exhilarated by the new art and thought he was riding the wave of modernism, so the timing of this flop hit him hard. He had lost a year of studio production to the administrative duties of curating the Armory Show, and his responsibilities and challenges were compounded when Edna Potter, the model who became his lifelong mistress, gave birth to their daughter Ronven (Ronnie) in April 1912. After the birth, he couldn’t rely on her to be his on-call model, although her pregnant form is visible in *Potentia*. Supporting two families left him economically strapped, and he couldn’t waste time producing paintings nobody wanted to buy.

To save time and regain clients, he began inserting older images of Potter, based on earlier sketches, into completed and stored landscapes, until he was able to hire Wreath McIntyre the following year. According to McIntyre’s annotations to the catalog of the 1918 Macbeth Gallery exhibition described above, Davies continued to resurrect earlier unsold landscapes by adding figures where there had been none. In this manner, *Homage to the Ocean* (ca. 1908) was “re-done” in 1914.<sup>29</sup> If it began as an emergency income-generating strategy, updating older canvases in this way became a reliable technique that he was still using a decade later. His dealer, Frederic Newlin Price recalled that *After Thoughts of Earth* was a “landscape of Nevada mountains and plain [that] belonged to me. Davies

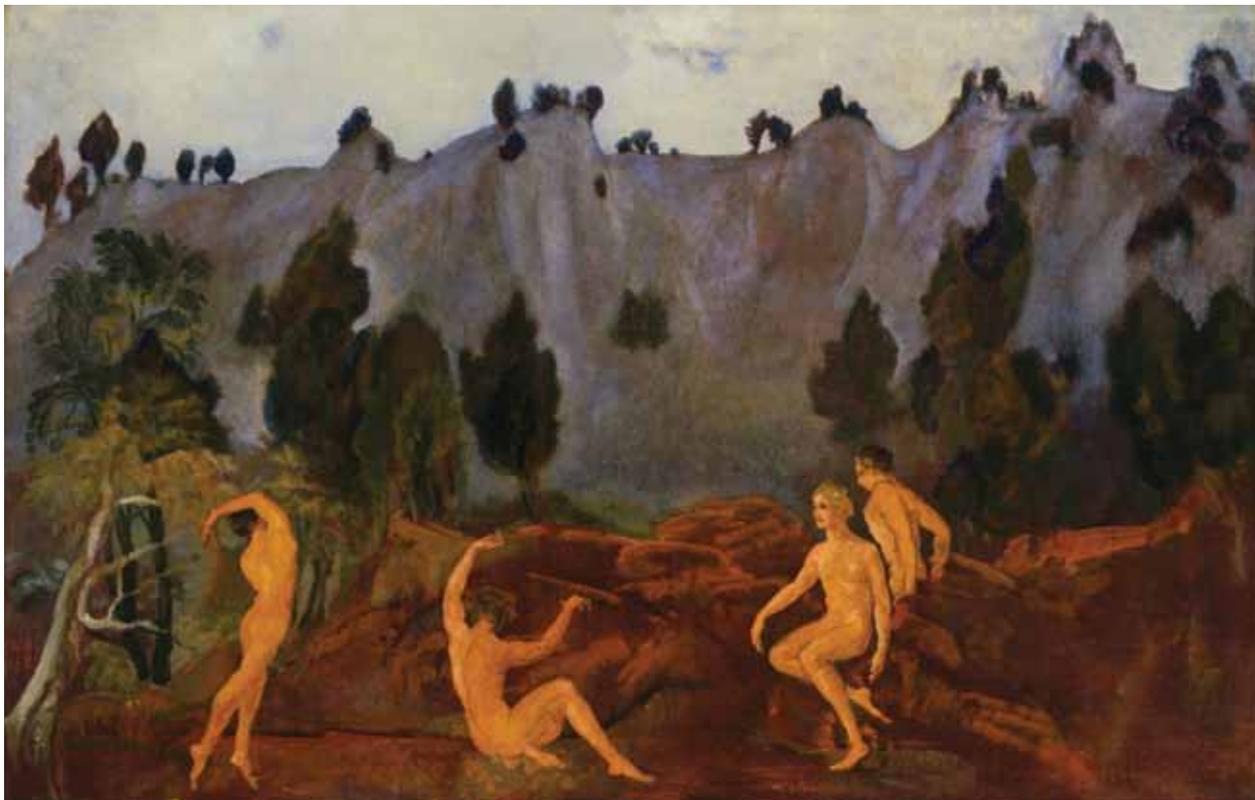


Fig. 13. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Hesitation of Orestes*, ca. 1915-18, oil on canvas, 26 x 40 1/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., Acquired 1923

asked for it and painted thereon several figures in red and blue and gold.” Afterwards, the piece won the \$1,500 first prize at the 1923 Carnegie International, and Stephen C. Clark, who had originally offered \$3,500 for the Nevada landscape, now paid an astronomical \$8000 for it.<sup>30</sup> Another painting that sold in the spring of 1923, and may have been repainted is a pastoral painting with the same title as his earlier synchromist *Day of Good Fortune*. The landscape and the clothed children look very much like his work of the 1890s, whereas the elongated nude balancing on her toes in the foreground fits the look of other paintings from this period (fig. 7).<sup>31</sup>

Despite careening shifts in style and media, consistent nude imagery provided a formal structure to Davies’s paintings. Like a poetry form – a sestina, sonnet, or haiku that determines the number, length, and placement of lines, syllables, and rhymes – the repetitive quality of his visual corps *enabled* experimentation by limiting his range. Davies refined and codified his vocabulary of human shapes by consistently working with the same models and/or same poses, amassing sketches and perfecting his line. Then, the artist used them interchangeably as building blocks for new work. The figures’ poses appear again and again, rendered in a wide stylistic range from the classicist, Arcadian, and warmly fleshed, to the flattened figures and limbs weaving into abstract patterns. Figures first recorded in drawings later reappeared in media that was made of more valuable and durable material and/or mechanically multiplied.

The exhibition that this text accompanies shows several examples of Davies’s favorite figure motifs, including original drawings matched with later manifestations in larger works on paper, prints, and paintings. Among those featured in the exhibition or supplemental illustrations here, Mac Cosgrove-Davies discovered recently that one of the (undated) drawings in his inherited collection (fig. 14 found additional life



Fig. 14. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
Untitled (Supplication), n.d.  
charcoal on paper  
14 ¾ x 11 in.  
Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Fig. 15. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Lunette*, 1917  
 drypoint on paper  
 5 5/8 in. x 5 5/16 in.  
 Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

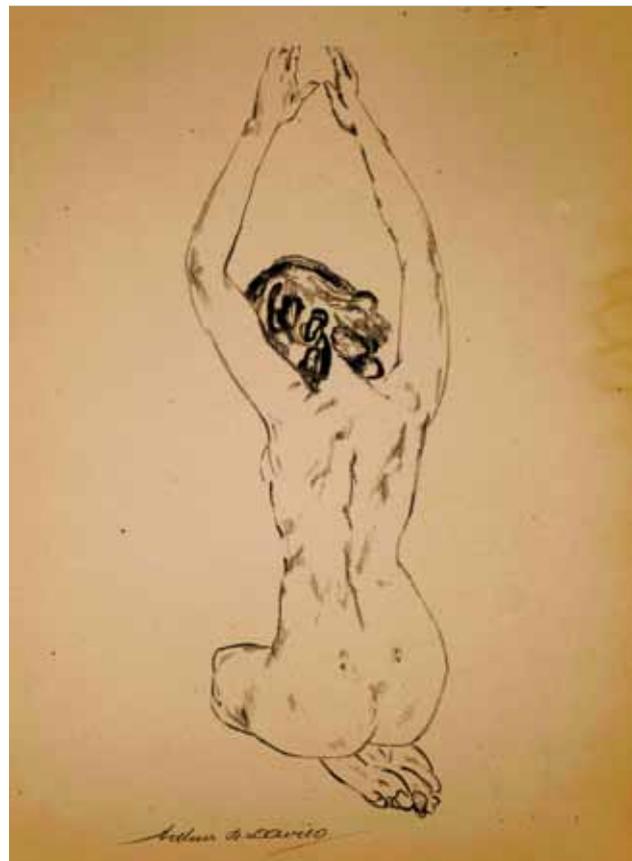


Fig. 16. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Supplication*, 1919-20  
 transfer lithograph on paper  
 12 x 8 in.  
 Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies

Fig. 17. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
 Untitled (*Supplication*), n.d.  
 bronze figurine  
 6 x 2 1/4 x 2 in.  
 Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



in the 1917 drypoint print *Lunette* (fig. 15), the 1919-20 transfer-lithograph print *Supplication* (fig. 16), and a bronze sculpture (fig. 17). Additionally, I was excited to discover that Davies used it in a fourth medium, the oil painting *Study* (n.d.), location currently unknown.<sup>32</sup> A cross-legged balancing female figure in the Maier Museum's large chalk drawing *Nude Female Figures* (fig. 18) also appears in the prints *Triad* (1917), *Balance* (1919-1920), and *Golden City* (1919-1920).<sup>33</sup> On the right margin of the same drawing (*Nude Female Figures*) is a cluster of standing figures that the artist inverted and placed in the top left corner of his print *Recurrence* (fig. 10), which features in itself several repetitions as well. A larger recurring conglomeration is visible in Davies's re-use of the six figures in *Inhalation Theory Study* (fig. 8). They recur in the background of *Study*, each occupying the same relative position on the top half of the picture plane. Such groupings imply a desirable relationship between the depicted elements.

The various treatments suggest that this approach supported his continuing quest for the perfect line while maximizing the income potential of successful imagery. For Davies, it was efficient to whittle his work down to studies of line, which he achieved most clearly in the white-on-black chalk drawings made in the early 1920s. Material evidence, such as lead pencil *pentimenti* (marks showing an artist's sequence of decisions, in this case, over-drawings) on chalk, show how he perfected and then repeated elements that he knew he could make well and that he knew would sell. In the late 1910s and 1920s, Davies experimented, broadening from sketches and oil and watercolor paintings to several printmaking techniques, cast bronze and glass figurines, and finally, tapestry. Strikingly, the broad range of media does not prevent them from all looking very much the same. Indeed, using the same imagery and formal characteristics in multiple media

actually flattened the differences in material qualities and emphasized the continuity of his line. When Davies turned from single-item manual productions to variations made with technical assistance from printers, casters, and weavers, he capitalized on the imagery that reliably drew consumers. He created distinctive imagery repeated in every media, emphasizing line over color in the prints and bronze casts made in multiples. By doing all of these things – simplifying his technique, repeating motives (movements) and visual motifs (decorative elements), and exploring economy of scale through diverse materials – he was conserving and maximizing his resources.

The timing shows that when financial circumstances required Davies to court consumers, he shifted his visual vocabulary back to that of a less abstract nude body, and devised a strategy that accommodated his penchant for experimentation while helping him churn out a tremendous amount of work. Davies trained his hand through intentional and precise replication, just as schoolchildren learned the Palmer style of handwriting through “muscular movement” in this period.<sup>34</sup> It is particularly obvious in his smooth and distinctive treatment of the female torso. But in the same way that one learns to recognize letters and then read various fonts, audiences came to identify and appreciate Davies's individual handiwork. Although the general feel and imagery of much of his oeuvre are derivative of others' styles – Ryder, Hodler, Puvis, Villon, Odilon Redon, and Francis Picabia – his way of drawing nudes, his way with line, was unique.

On this, critics agreed: for Davies, “*the line is the thing*; always of first importance and superior interest.”<sup>35</sup> Davies became known

to his contemporaries as “a masterly draftsman” with well-“trained . . . consummate fingers.” In describing the large frieze-like chalk-drawings, the *New York Herald Tribune*’s conservative art critic Royal Cortissoz added: “Davies was so sure of his form, so sure of his line and pattern, so sweeping and so noble in the expression of an attitude and the definition of a contour.”<sup>36</sup> Another critic, also writing in the wake of Davies’ unexpected 1928 death, paused during a review of a watercolors exhibit to comment: “he was so completely master of his medium that there was no technical barrier between his conception and its translation to paper. He put things down with an unbelievable simplicity without a single wasted or uncertain line or a brush stroke.”<sup>37</sup> These tributes all point to the critics’ perception that efficiency characterized the artist’s approach.

Beginning in the later decades of the nineteenth century, avant-garde artists pursued just such a visually identifiable individualism. Artists perfected their “look” by repeating motifs and/or qualities. Such perseverance could be commercially advantageous. Artists tried to corner the market on particular approaches or topics, declaring “ownership of aesthetic ‘properties,’” Sarah Burns explains in *Inventing the Modern Artist*. While aesthetically limiting, solidifying one’s “product line” was profitable when audiences came to know and accept an artist’s commodities at first glance.<sup>38</sup> These material circumstances instrumentally contributed to why Davies’s art looked the way it did; he needed to increase his marketable output efficiently.

The repetitive quality of the artist’s work contributed to his success by meeting market demand for product consistency. This is no mark against him; it was simply one of the conditions of being a working artist during the rise of the gallery-driven art economy. In fact, as Charles Stuckey suggests in “The Predications and Implications of Monet’s Series,” the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century gallery market system supported and to some degree may have determined, the insistent seriality practiced by Claude Monet, Renoir, Rodin, Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and other major and minor modernists. Unlike annual academy exhibitions where space was limited and each piece had to be strong enough to stand alone, galleries dedicated substantial space to solo shows and did not hesitate to pack the walls with variations on a theme. Consumers responded by buying and hanging multiples, a domestic curatorial maneuver sure to earn cultural capital with those who knew that Monet’s haystack paintings, for example, were made and meant to be considered dialectically, each in relation to others.<sup>39</sup> As I show in the concluding section of this essay, Davies’s repetitions similarly contributed to an overall aesthetic program while being conveniently marketable in multiples.



Fig. 18. Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Nude Female Figures*, n.d., chalk on paper, 22 x 42 in. each image. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

## CONTINUOUS COMPOSITION AND *DURCHKOMPONIERT*

Davies's credo, "I use the method of 'continuous composition' – repetition of the same motive" carries an additional meaning that I propose he may have taken from the German composer Richard Wagner. In the mid-nineteenth-century, the composer created *durchkomponiert* (through-composed) operas; in these the music is continuous, and repeats *leitmotifs* (leading motifs) that symbolize an important figure or concept, each time with significant musical variation. He aspired to make productions that would combine dance, music, and poetry into a multisensory total work of art, a *gesamtkunstwerk*. When staged, the productions were to be enveloping and fluid, creating a temporal and sensory quality that could hypnotize and manipulate crowds, argues Jonathan Crary in *Suspensions of Perception*. There were to be no breaks in the music, nor unevenness in the production's demands for the audience's attention, such that they required and cultivated "an audience capable of sustained and *continuous* attention through an entire performance." Wagner's custom-designed theater at Bayreuth supported an unprecedented audience experience of sensory immersion, uninterrupted by lateral views from boxes, a visible orchestra, or ambient lighting. The composer wanted each piece to have aesthetic unity. There was an underlying physiological component derived from perceptual psychology; Crary points out that Wagner wanted each performance to give audiences a shared sensory experience with the potential of "welding individuals into a social unity, by imposing a uniform mode of perception and response."<sup>40</sup>

In view of Davies's passion for Wagner, the composer is a likely the source for Davies's specific use of the term "continuous composition" in his artistic creed.<sup>41</sup> While living in Chicago, from 1879 through 1887, Davies followed local productions of Wagner's works, attending *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, and concert selections. Opera characters like Nixie (see catalog cover), Siegfried, Isolde, Hagen, and Brangäne appear in paintings from the early 1890s. Almost twenty years later, Davies's enthusiasm had not abated; he purchased Wagner's 1911 autobiography *My Life* and shared it with his protégé, the painter Rockwell Kent. "Perhaps [Davies was] emulating the Wagnerian ideal of a unified artistic expression by painting canvases where figure and ground, atmosphere and object are gathered into one indissoluble texture," suggested Elizabeth Johns in 1982, adding that the Wagnerian goals of unifying man with nature, and mind with body are other shared ideals that can be seen in Davies's imagery.<sup>42</sup>

In Elizabeth Sussman's assessment of Davies's interest in Wagner and synaesthetic equations between the formal qualities of sound and visual art, I believe she gets it exactly right when she emphasizes that Davies was not necessarily trying to create literal sounds, but rather he "transferred a notion of musical structure to the composition of the pictorial field. . . . [He] conceptualized composition with musical phrasing in mind; his means were theme, repetition and the unfolding and development of motif. The gesturing figure was the expressive unit of form and meaning." In other words, the figure was the motif. She describes his frieze paintings of 1908–1914 as particularly successful explorations of this approach.<sup>43</sup> When, in the early 1920s, he returned to this format, now in white-on-black chalk drawings, peers frequently commented on their "rhythmic" compositions in terms that clearly imply musical *analogy* rather than metaphor. It wasn't that Davies necessarily

wanted viewers of his art to *hear* music; rather, as synchromist Willard Huntington Wright explained his modernist aesthetics in 1923, it was the quality of music, as it (and other things) stimulated muscular and nervous vibrations in the artist, and were conveyed via visual art to the receiver, that modern painters wanted to achieve.<sup>44</sup>

This goal was embedded in the discourse of physiological aesthetics, which proposed that the aesthetic experience occurs in the kinesthetic feeling of movement.<sup>45</sup> It was precisely in this period that the transatlantic field of physiological psychology emerged and overturned Aristotelian interpretations of the relationship of imagery and motive. For 2,000 years western culture predominantly believed that the individual, through force of will, sends energy to her muscles to act in response to images in the mind: I want to get up, I visualize myself getting up, I get up. Between the 1870s and 1920s, experimental psychologists debated a new formulation, in which bodies respond automatically to stimuli, and then formulate internal imagery and sensory memories that are reawakened at the next appearance of the stimuli. An example would be what happens when a person who is sleeping away from home gets up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, and while half-asleep shuffles along the path habitually taken at home, accidentally bumping into the hotel wall. After enough iterations of any activity, bodily memory – “kinaesthetic imagery” – kicks in before the conscious mind has fully processed the circumstance that stimulates it.

For the American psychologist and pragmatic philosopher William James, such “kinaesthetic imagery” was essential to all conscious bodily movement. Much of the early-twentieth-century experimental-psychology discourse probed this problem, at the heart of which was the question of how imagery relates to “motive,” here meaning the potential direction of energy into kinetic movement. In aesthetic applications of this theory, when art repeats a visual or musical motif, it reinforces and enhances the kinesthetic response that consequently generates the “imagery” of ideas and emotions. A viewer’s body empathetically responds to form in visual art, because the stimulus prompts internal kinaesthetic memories. This was an essential element of the aesthetic concept of visual rhythm, as it was understood at the time; we can see Hodler’s parallelism as one version, and Davies’s continuous composition as another.<sup>46</sup>

The formal attributes of Davies’s compositions suggest his attempts at Wagnerian *durchkomponiert*. Over time, his critics recognized visual correspondences between figures and landscape, and believed repeated motifs (“motives”) signaled shared energy across forms, just as a motif repeated in different keys, voices, and rhythms unifies a musical composition. Wagner would have been one of several points of access for Davies to learn about this widespread concept. By repeating motives within a single work, Davies created a sense of compositional unity. By repeating motives across multiple works in multiple genres, he aimed for continuity – continuous composition – throughout his oeuvre.

A patron, such as Lizzie (known to friends and later legally as “Lillie”) Plummer Bliss, who bought several of Davies’s drawings, paintings, and prints and hung them together, created environments with a greater possibility of achieving *durchkomponiert*. Bliss went a step further, commissioning Davies to paint her entire music room in 1914. He filled the space with thirteen floor-to-ceiling mural panels that harmonized with the marble fireplace, accounted for the distribution of light in the room, and hypothetically escorted listeners into a Wagnerian sense of aesthetic immersion in audio-visual vibrations. He even convinced Bliss to hire Charles Prendergast to create additional framing for the doors and windows, thus approaching Whistler’s similarly coherent “Peacock Room.” Ten years later, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, another dedicated collector of his work, commissioned Davies to paint murals for the lobby of the International House, a graduate student dormitory funded by the Rockefellers to serve multiple universities in New York City.<sup>47</sup>

It was in this context that the artist posted his “Credo,” which included the sentence to which I have returned throughout this essay: “I use the method of ‘continuous composition’ – repetition of the same motive.” Davies’s application of “continuous composition” here, seen in this context, ties his credo to Wagner’s aesthetic goal of creating a total environment that would “motivate” – give motion to – a sensory and emotional experience in his opera audiences. This was accomplished by Wagner through repeated motifs/motives in multi-sensory formats.

Thus, the repetition of figures throughout Davies’s career simultaneously served aesthetic and financial functions. According to physiological aesthetics, a collector who amassed Davies’s art and hung it together could have a more productive aesthetic experience because the repetition would reinforce aesthetic sensations of neuro-muscular vibrations. Thus, it is surprising but true that the “motives” the artist repeated to form “continuous composition” come back to practices and ideas about kinesthetic movement that were specific to this period in American art history. Whether taken as psychological motive, or aesthetic motif, in either case the goal was movement.

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Robin Veder, 2011. Mac Cosgrove-Davies, photographer.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Acknowledgements: Some of the material in this essay previously appeared in Robin Veder, "Arthur B. Davies' Inhalation Theory of Art." *American Art* 23 (Spring 2009): 56-77, and is © 2009 Smithsonian Institution, all rights reserved. For their assistance, I am indebted to the Cosgrove-Davies family, the staff of the Maier Museum, Carolyn Kastner, Elizabeth Lee, Barbara Buhler Lynes, Brandy Parris, Kelly Quinn, Silvia Serrano, Ashley Stahle, and Alan Wallach. Additional support was provided by the Smithsonian American Art Museum fellowship program, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Research Center, the Penn State Harrisburg Office of Research and Graduate Studies, and the Penn State University School of Art and Architecture.
- Elizabeth Johns, "Arthur B. Davies and Albert Pinkham Ryder: The Fix of the Art Historian," *Arts Magazine* 56, no. 5 (January 1982): 70-71. See also Brooks Wright, *The Artist and the Unicorn: The Lives of Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928* (New City, N.Y.: Historical Society of Rockland County, 1978); Joseph S. Czestochowski, *Arthur B. Davies: A Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1987); Judith Zilczer, "Arthur B. Davies: The Artist as Patron," *American Art Journal* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 54-83; Bennard Perlman, *The Lives, Loves, and Art of Arthur B. Davies* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1998); Christine I. Oaklander, "Arthur B. Davies, William Fraetas, and 'Color Law,'" *American Art* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 10-31.
- 2 T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place for Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).
- 3 Frederic Newlin Price, *The Etchings and Lithographs of Arthur B. Davies* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1929), 16; Bryson Burroughs, "Arthur B. Davies," *Arts* 15, no. 2 (February 1929): 81-86; Perlman, *Lives*, 101, 149, 243, 253-55, 259, 266, 286, 299, 320; Frederic Newlin Price, *Goodbye Ferargil* (New Hope, PA: The Huffnagle Press, c. 1958), n.p.; Wreath McIntyre Mason, hand-written annotations to Macbeth Galleries, *Loan Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolors, Drawings, Etchings & Sculpture by Arthur B. Davies*, 1918, n.p., photocopy in Box 6B, Folder 12, Davies Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives, Delaware Art Museum.
- 4 Arthur B. Davies, "Credo," in Price, *Etchings*, 19.
- 5 Perlman, *Lives*, 332-33, 343.
- 6 Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 3-5; "motive, n.," "motive, adj.," "motive, v.," and "motif, n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Second edition, 1989, online version June 2012, accessed 22 May 2012, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122712>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122713>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122714>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12268>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122712>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122713>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122714>; <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12268>.
- 7 "Continuous Representation," Getty Research Institute, Art and Architecture Thesaurus Online, ID: 300056330, accessed 22 May 2012, <http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat/http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat/>.
- 8 Arthur B. Davies, "Credo," in Price, *Etchings*, 19; Marc Simpson, "Frieze Frames: Painted Processions in American Art about 1900," in *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880-1910*, eds. Nancy Mowll Mathews with Charles Musser, (Manchester, Vt.: Hudson Hills Press, 2005), 102; Perlman, *Lives*, 223-226.
- 9 Elizabeth S. Sussman, "Rhythm and Music in the Frieze Paintings of Arthur B. Davies," in *Dream Vision: The Work of Arthur B. Davies* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1981) n.p.
- 10 Simpson, "Frieze Frames," 102; Percy B. Ingham, "The Method: Growth and Practice," in Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, *The Eurhythmics of Jaques-Dalcroze* (Boston: Small Maynard and company, 1913), 26-36.
- 11 Price, *Etchings and Lithographs*, 16; Perlman, *Lives*, 285-88; Czestochowski, introduction to *Arthur B. Davies*, 20-24, 48
- fn. 17. On Davies and Duncan, see also Mary Schrensky Boese, "Rhythm and the Metaphysical Muse: Arthur B. Davies and the Dance Motif" (M.A. thesis, Virginia Commonwealth Univ., 1989).
- 12 Gustavus A. Eisen, "Davies Recovers the Inhalation of the Greeks," in *Arthur B. Davies: Essays on the Man and His Art*, The Phillips Publications no. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1924), 69-70. Eisen refers to the painting not by name, but by reference to its reproduction in "The Exhibitions," *The Arts* 3, no. 5 (May 1923): 364.
- 13 Gustavus A. Eisen, *The Great Chalice of Antioch: On Which Are Depicted in Sculpture the Earliest Known Portraits of Christ, Apostles and Evangelists* (New York: Kouchakji Frères, 1923), 1:78; Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 65.
- 14 Wreath McIntyre Mason to Brooks Wright, October 10, 1967, Brooks Wright Collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Perlman, *Lives*, 288-89.
- 15 Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 84-119.
- 16 Czestochowski, introduction to *Arthur B. Davies*, 24; Ferdinand Hodler "Parallelism" (1923), trans. Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, *Artists on Art*, reproduced in Herschel B. Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 107-08.
- 17 On *Maya*, see Sussman, "Rhythm," n.p.; Simpson, "Frieze Frames," 102.
- 18 Edward Alden Jewell, "The Dance in Art Theme of Exhibit," *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1933, p. 21; Montross Gallery, "Special Exhibition: Contemporary Art, January 23<sup>rd</sup> to February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1923," (NY, 1923), n.p., Montross Gallery Exhibition Catalogs, 1908-1926, Microfilm reel 4859, frames 763-64, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- 19 Duncan Phillips, "Arthur B. Davies: Designer of Dreams," in *Arthur B. Davies* (1924), 18-19.

- 20 Burroughs, "Arthur B. Davies," 91-93.
- 21 Anonymous introduction to Hardesty G. Maratta, "A Rediscovery of the Principles of Form Measurement," *Arts and Decoration* 4, no. 6 (April 1914): 231; Marie Frank, *Denman Ross and American Design Theory* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2011), 138-41.
- 22 Jennifer L. Shaw, *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002); Perlman, *Lives*, 91, 101-2; Boese, "Rhythm," 25.
- 23 Davies, "Credo", 19.
- 24 Perlman, *Lives*, 242-243; Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* (New York: Abbeville Press for the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1988), 321.
- 25 Wreath McIntyre Mason to Bennard Perlman, 19 Dec. 1986, Perlman correspondence file M, Arthur B. Davies Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives, Delaware Art Museum.
- 26 Duncan Phillips, "The American Painter, Arthur B. Davies," *Art and Archaeology* 4:3 (Sept. 1916): 175-76.
- 27 Duncan Phillips, "Arthur B. Davies," 3, viii.
- 28 Leo Stein, "The Painting of Arthur B. Davies," *The New Republic* 13 (January 19, 1918): 338; "The Visionary Adventures of Arthur B. Davies," *Current Opinion* 64, no. 3 (March 1918): 204.
- 29 Mason, annotations to *Loan Exhibition*, Davies Collection.
- 30 "A.B. Davies and Eugene Speicher Win First Two Prizes at Carnegie International," *The Art News* 21, no. 29 (April 28, 1923): 1; Frederic Newlin Price, "The Etchings and Lithographs of Arthur B. Davies," *Print* 1 (Nov. 1930): 3, as quoted in Perlman, *Lives*, 320; Price, *Goodbye Ferargil*, n.p.
- 31 "Collectors Acquiring Paintings Executed by Arthur B. Davies," *The Art News* 21, no. 31 (May 12, 1923): 1; "The Exhibitions," 364.
- 32 I am grateful to the Cosgrove-Davies family for several fine afternoons during which we paged through glorious boxes of original drawings and prints, vigorously consulting multiple sources in our treasure hunt for matched figures and twisting ourselves into the gymnastic pretzels Davies depicted. *Study* was owned by Cleveland Museum of Art at the time a reproduction was published in Forbes Watson, "Arthur B. Davies," *Magazine of Art* 45, no. 8 (Dec. 1952): 363.
- 33 Perlman, *Lives*, 301-305; Czestochowski, *Arthur B. Davies*, 110-111, 162-63, 177-78.
- 34 Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 66-69.
- 35 Elisabeth Luther Cary, "Boundaries and Directions in the Art of Arthur B. Davies," in *Arthur B. Davies: Essays on the Man and his Art*, ed. Duncan Phillips, subscriber's edition, (Riverside Press, 1925), 83.
- 36 Royal Cortissoz, *New York Herald Tribune*, quoted in "Davies the Mystic," *Literary Digest* (19 January 1929): 20-21.
- 37 "Davies Watercolors shown at Ferargil Galleries," 1929, clippings file, Davies Collection
- 38 Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 124-25.
- 39 Charles Stuckey, "The Predications and Implications of Monet's Series," in *The Repeating Image: Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse*, exh. cat., Eik Kahng, ed. (Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum with Yale University Press, 2007), 92-93, 97-100.
- 40 Richard Wagner, "The Art-Work of the Future," in *The Art-Work of the Future*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (1895), 69-213; Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), 249, 248. Juliet Koss takes a different perspective, and fully contextualizes Wagner's notion of *gesamtkunstwerk* within the history of *empfindung*, empathy theory formulated in German physiological aesthetics, in *Modernism after Wagner* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
- 41 Notice that in Davies's original text, the term appears in quotation marks suggesting attribution. I have not located this precise term in English translations of Wagner's *My Life* or his essay "The Art-Work of the Future," so this is a bit of conjecture.
- 42 Perlman, *Lives*, 27, 65-68, 197; Johns, "Arthur B. Davies," 73-74.
- 43 Sussman, "Rhythm and Music," n.p.
- 44 Willard Huntington Wright, *The Future of Painting* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1923), 34. Christine I. Oaklander convincingly shows Davies's interest in the color-music analogies in spiritual and aesthetic theories of the time. However, taking the analogies to be synesthetic, "correspondence between the senses, such as hearing a color or smelling music," overlooks the more basic importance in the period of neuromuscular vibrations, regardless of the specific sensory stimuli. Oaklander, "Arthur B. Davies, William Fraetas, and 'Color Law,'" *American Art* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 17, 10-31.
- 45 For an overview of "motor response" aesthetic theories, as understood in 1920, see Herbert Sidney Langfeld, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 109-57.
- 46 C.E. McMahon, "Images as Motives and Motivators: A Historical Perspective," *The American Journal of Psychology* 86, no. 3 (Sept. 1973): 475-83. I explore this topic at more length in "Walking through Dumbarton Oaks: Early Twentieth-Century Bourgeois Bodily Techniques and Kinesthetic Experience of Landscape," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71, no. 1 (forthcoming March, 2013), and in great depth in my book manuscript "The Living Line."
- 47 Perlman, *Lives*, 258-261, 332.



GALLERY 6

# MODERN MOVEMENT:

ARTHUR BOWEN DAVIES FIGURATIVE WORKS ON PAPER  
FROM THE RANDOLPH COLLEGE AND MAC COSGROVE-DAVIES COLLECTIONS

Illustrated Checklist



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Untitled (Supplication)*, n.d., bronze figurine, 6 x 2 ¼ x 2 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Mac Cosgrove-Davies, born 1957, *Emma #3*, 2011, cyanotype on paper, 6 ½ x 3 ¾ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Untitled (Supplication)*, n.d., charcoal on paper, 14 ¾ x 11 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Supplication*, 1919-20, transfer lithograph on paper, 12 x 8 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Two Nudes with Tree*, 1919, watercolor on paper, 11 7/8 x 8 3/4 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Amber Garden*, 1919, etching on paper, 11 3/4 x 7 3/4 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Untitled (Seated Nude)*, n.d., pastel on paper, 18 x 13 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Amber Garden*, 1919-1920, aquatint on paper, 12 x 7 7/8 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *By the Sea*, 1919, etching on paper, 9 x 6 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *By the River*, 1913, watercolor on paper, 10  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 8  $\frac{13}{16}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Three Nudes in Landscape*, n.d., watercolor on paper, 8  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 6  $\frac{7}{16}$  in., Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Sketch for Tiptoeing Youth*, ca. 1910, chalk on paper, 14  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



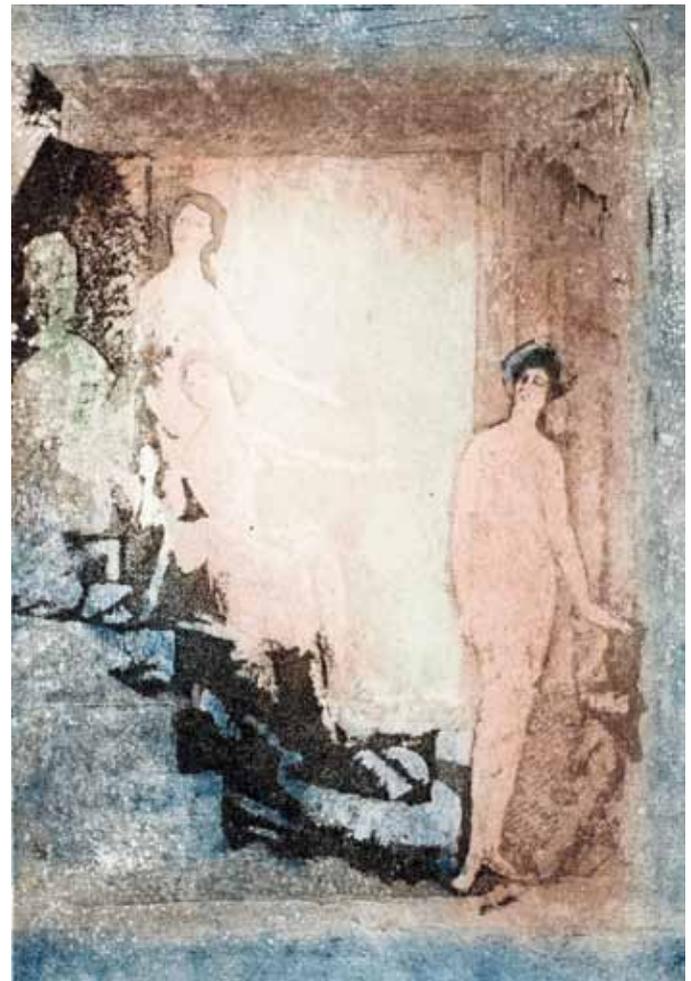
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Bathers*, 1921, monotype on paper, 15 1/16 x 11 1/2 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Circling Doves*, 1921, transfer lithograph on paper, 22 x 15 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *The Temple*, 1922, aquatint on paper, 11 13/16 x 7 7/8 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *The Temple*, 1918-19, etching on paper, 12 x 8 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Lunette*, 1917, drypoint on paper, 5  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 5  $\frac{5}{8}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Angled Beauty*, 1918, etching on paper, 8 x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Potentia*, 1920, aquatint on paper, 4  $\frac{3}{16}$  x 10  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928  
*Toil of Three*, 1919-1921, aquatint on paper, 6  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 3  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Gift of Mr. Robert G. McIntyre, 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Untitled (Kneeling Woman)*, n.d., pastel on paper, 14 x 11 ¼ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Queen of Dusk*, 1919-20, lithograph on paper, 9 x 6 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



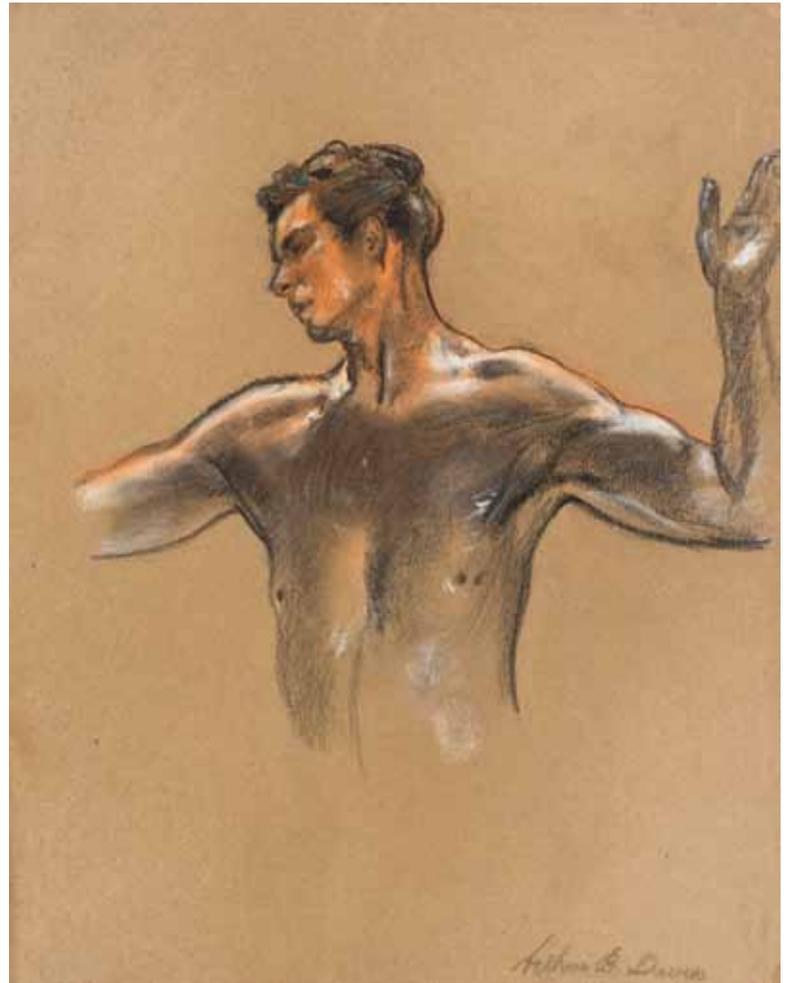
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Morning Quiet*, 1919-20, transfer lithograph on paper, 11 ¼ x 8 ½ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Untitled (Nude Sketch)*, n.d., pencil on paper, 11 ½ x 8 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Iris*, 1916, drypoint on paper, 8  $\frac{13}{16}$  x 6  $\frac{13}{16}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Untitled (Male Torso)*, n.d., pastel on paper, 14  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Two Nude Figures*, n.d., chalk on paper, 10  $\frac{15}{16}$  x 8  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *An Eddy in Stream*, n.d., pastel on paper, 11 x 15 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Reaching Male), n.d., pastel on paper, 12 ¼ x 17 ¾ in. Courtesy of the estate of David Livingston Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Male with Bear), n.d., pastel on paper, 12 x 17 ¼ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



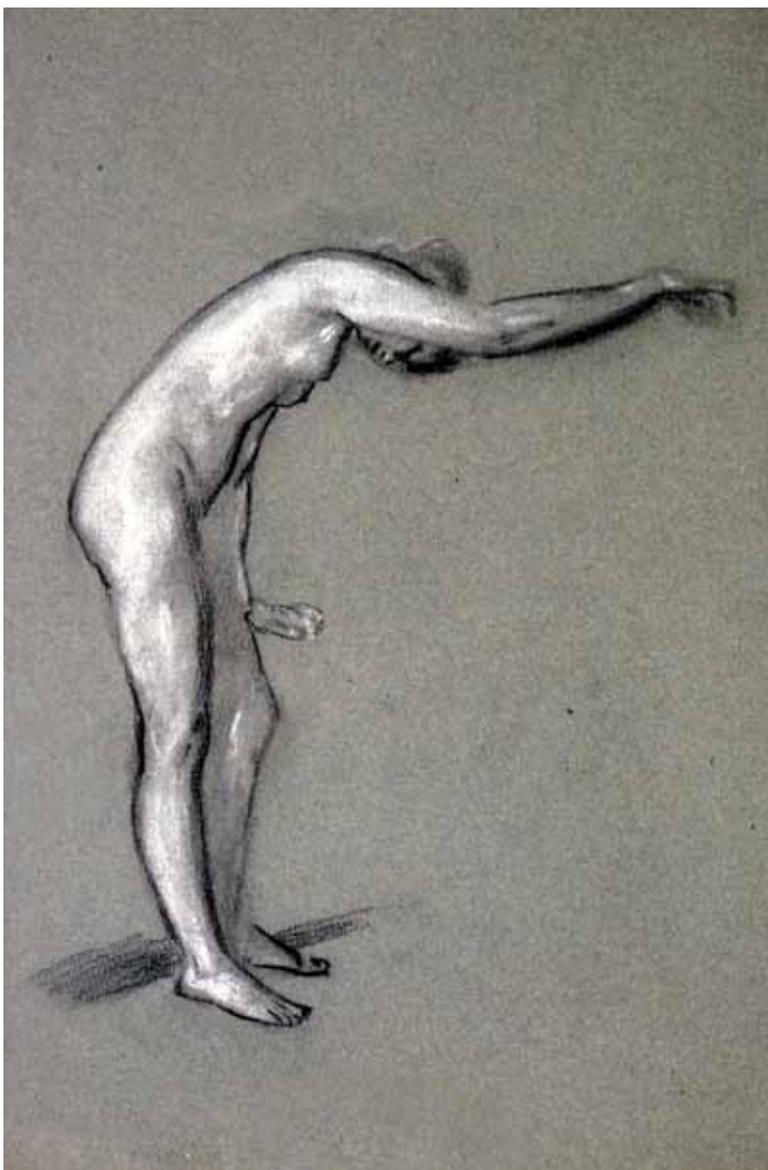
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Nude Male with Drape), n.d., pastel on paper, 15 x 14 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



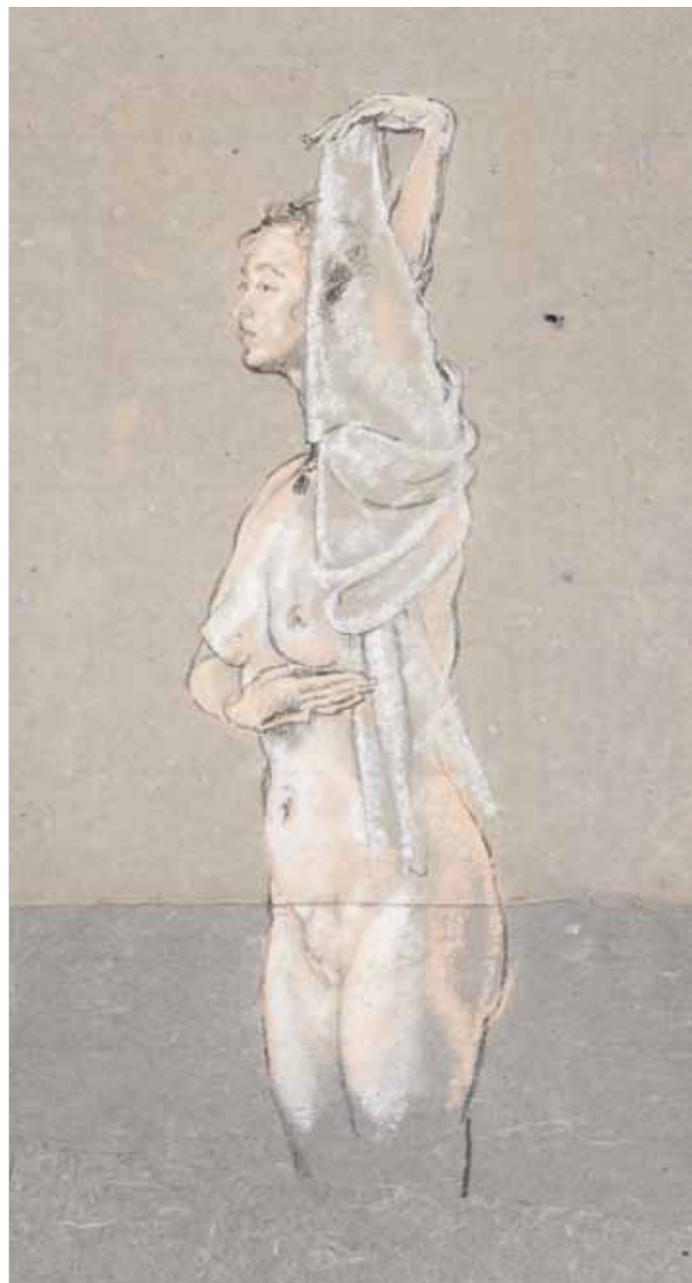
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Nude with Drape), n.d., pastel on paper, 18 x 10 ¾ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



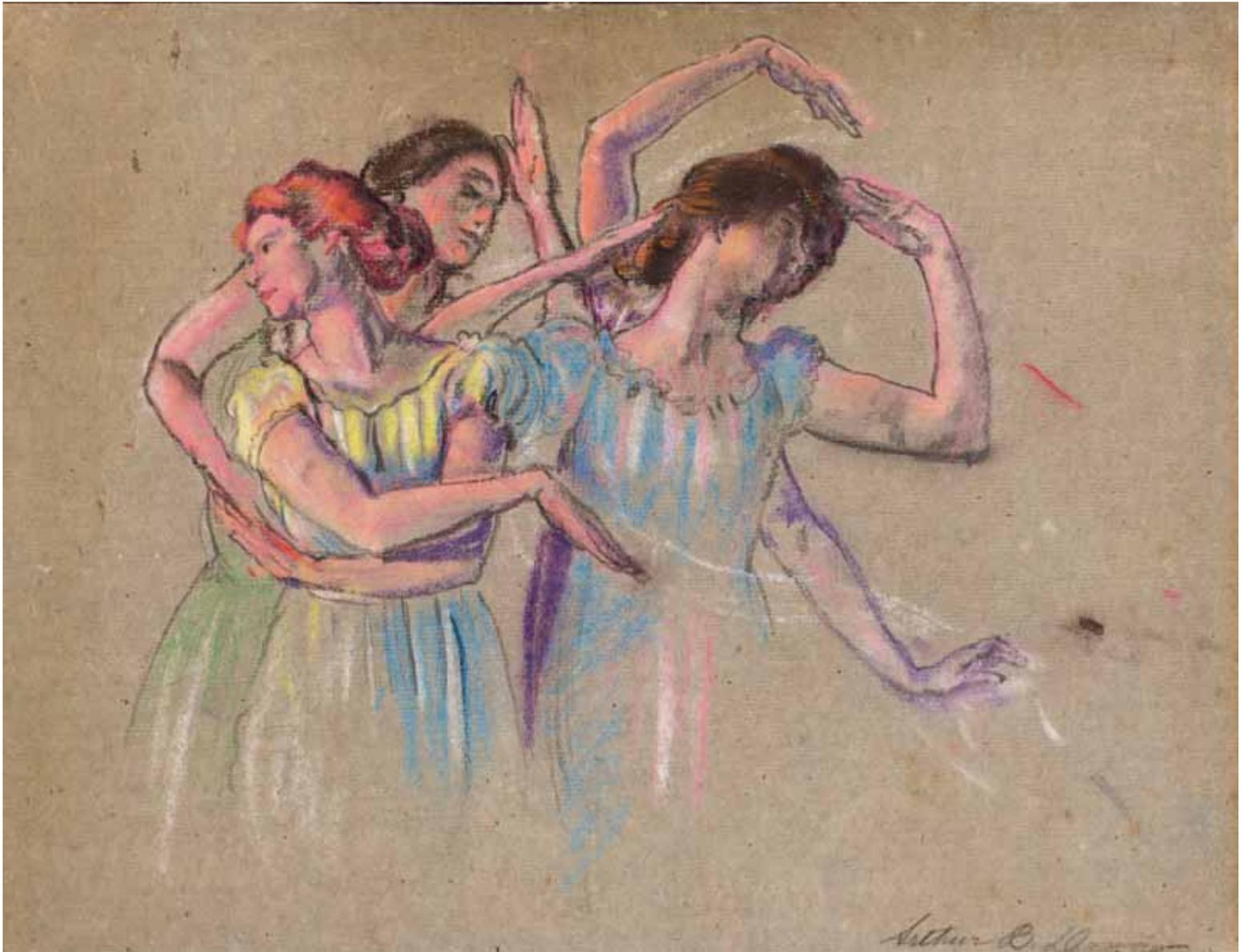
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Crouching and Kneeling Nude Woman*, n.d.,  
chalk on paper, 9  $\frac{7}{16}$  x 13  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



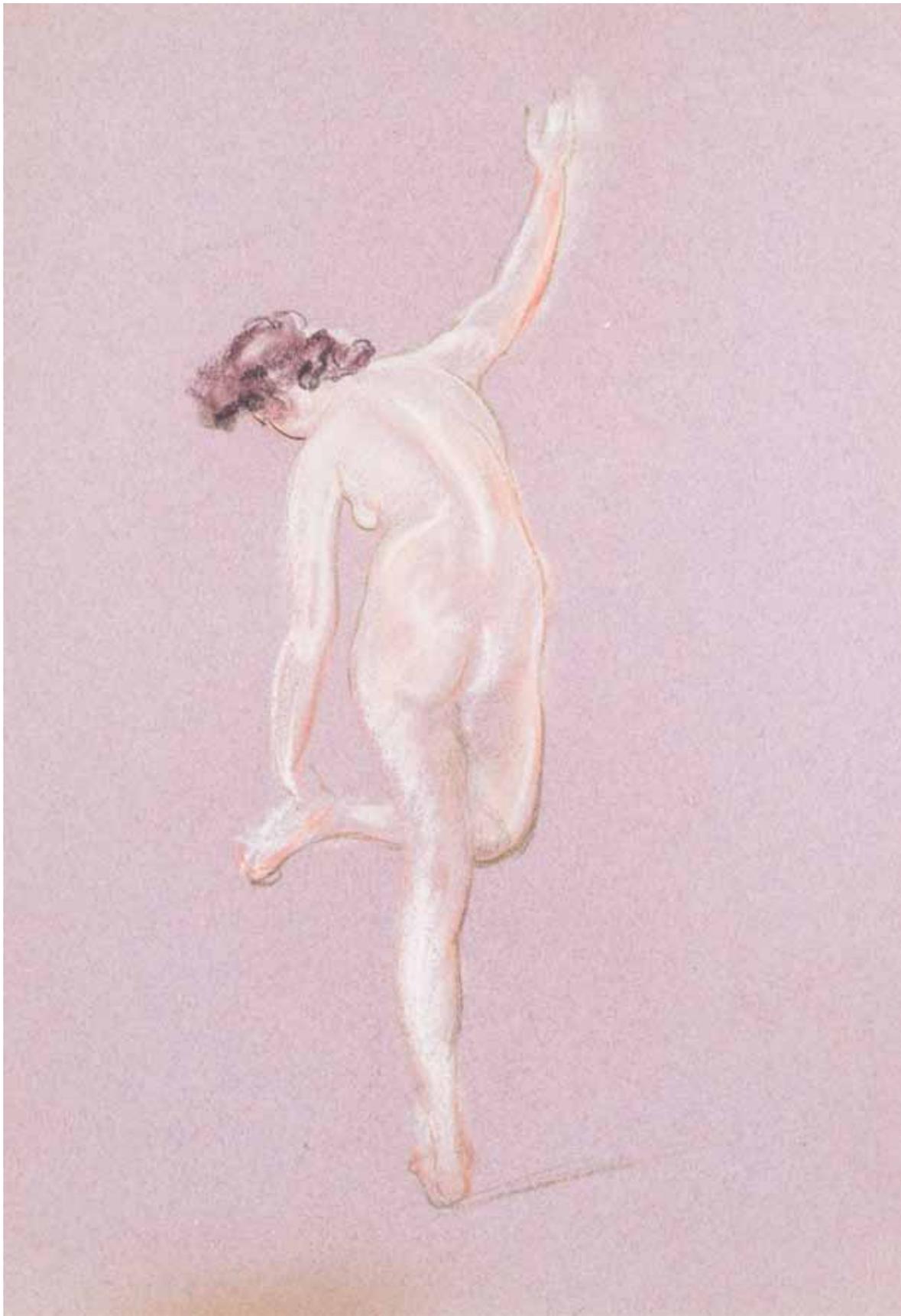
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Nude*, n.d.,  
chalk on paper, 7  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



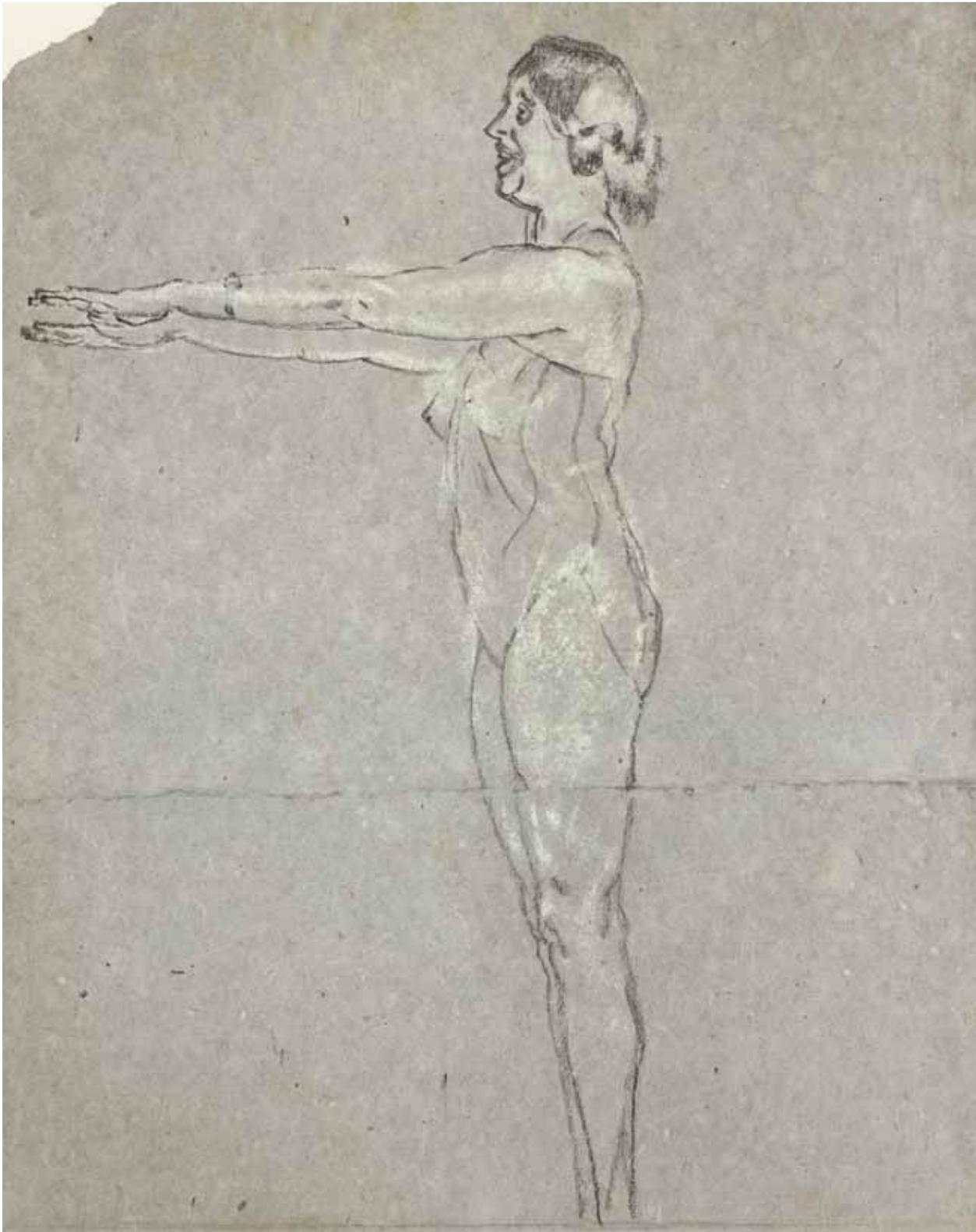
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Sketch for Do Reverence*, 1912, chalk on paper,  
16  $\frac{1}{6}$  x 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



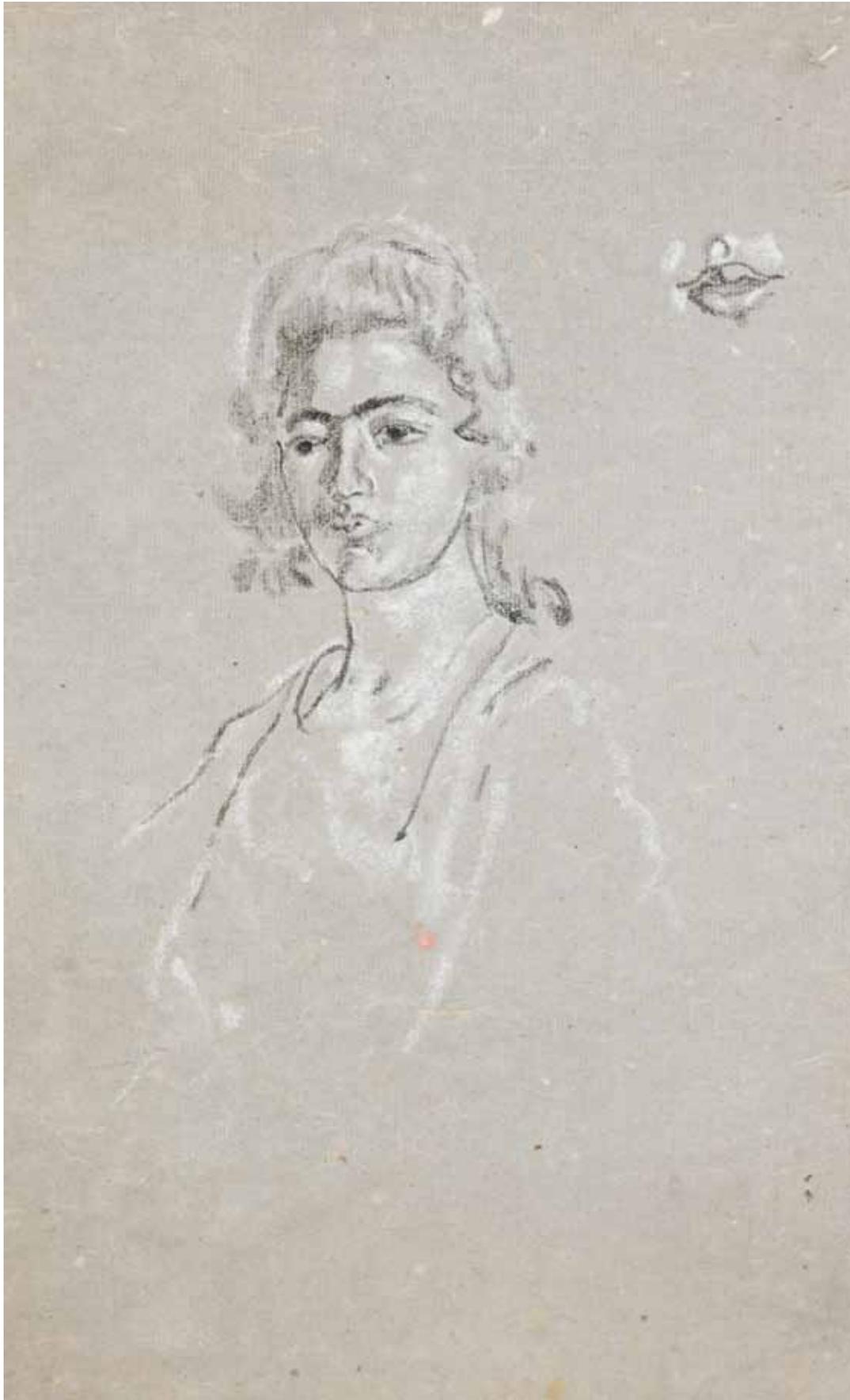
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Four Dancers), n.d., pastel on paper, 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 14 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. Courtesy of Ashley Carlton



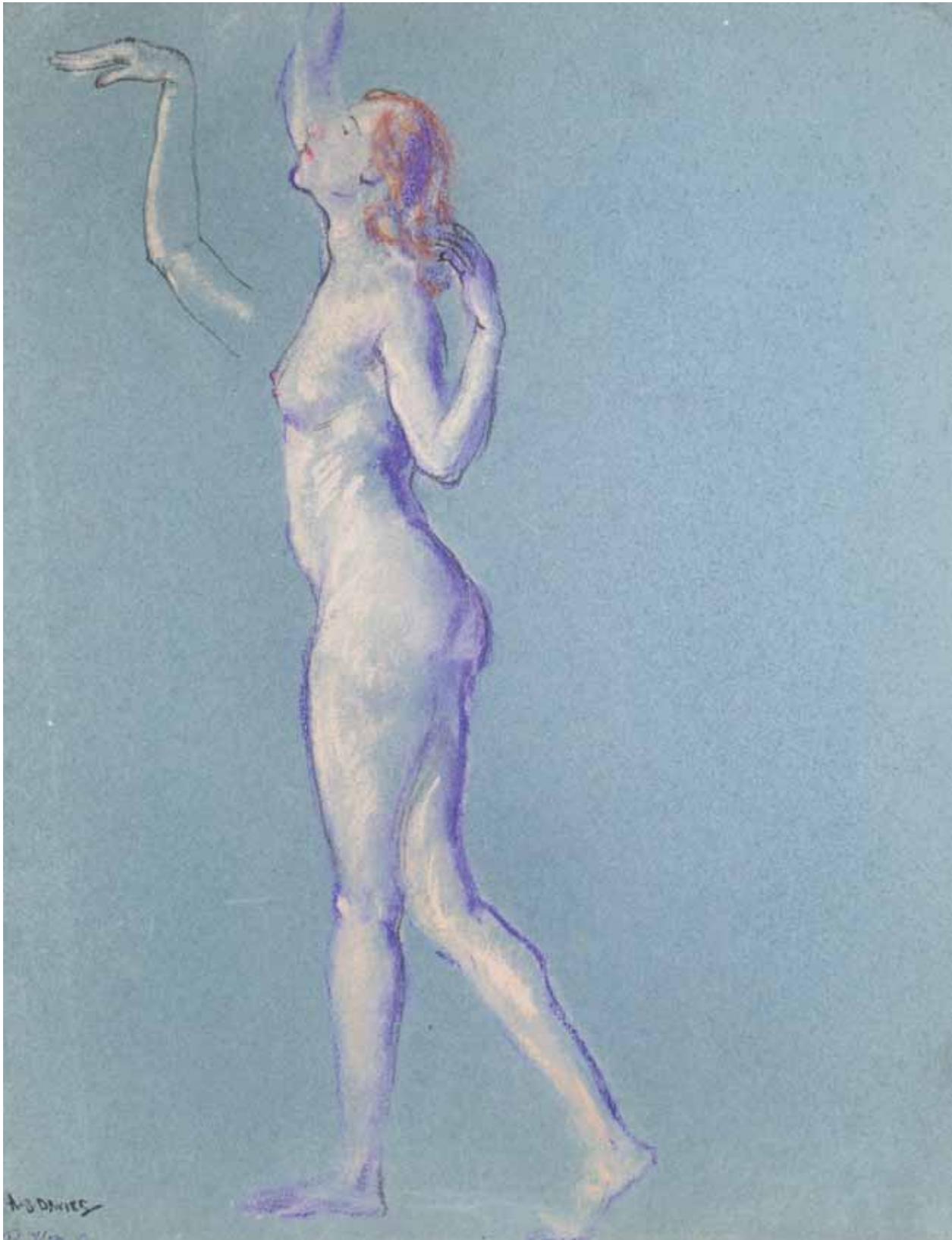
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Nude Balancing on One Foot), n.d., pastel on paper, 13 ½ x 10 in.  
Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Nude Balancing), n.d., pastel on paper, 16 ½ x 14 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Portrait), n.d., charcoal on paper, 14 ½ x 9 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Dancing Woman), n.d., pastel on paper, 14 ¼ x 11 ¼ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Floating Figures [I]*, n.d., pastel on paper, 17 x 10 ½ in. Gift of Mrs. A. Conger Goodyear, 1952



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Floating Figures [II]*, n.d., pastel on paper, 16 x 11 ½ in. Gift of Mrs. A. Conger Goodyear, 1952



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Floating Figures [III]*, n.d., pastel on paper, 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Gift of Mrs. A. Conger Goodyear, 1952



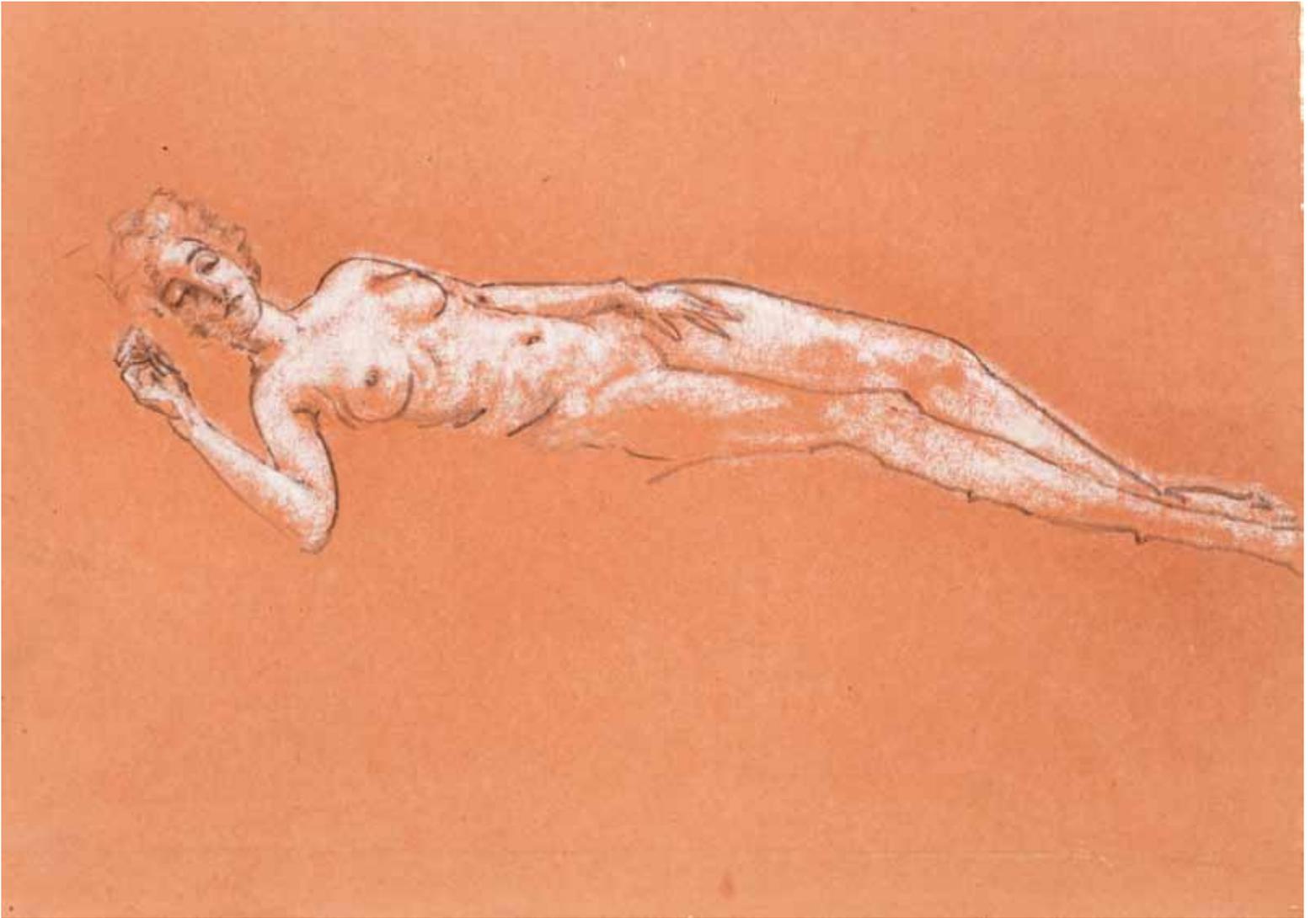
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Nude with Red Hair), n.d., pastel on paper, 14 ¼ x 10 ½ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Profile Portrait), n.d., pastel on paper, 12 x 10 ½ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Margaret*, n.d., pencil on paper, 14 x 10 ½ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Sleeping Nude), n.d., pastel on paper, 13 x 18 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



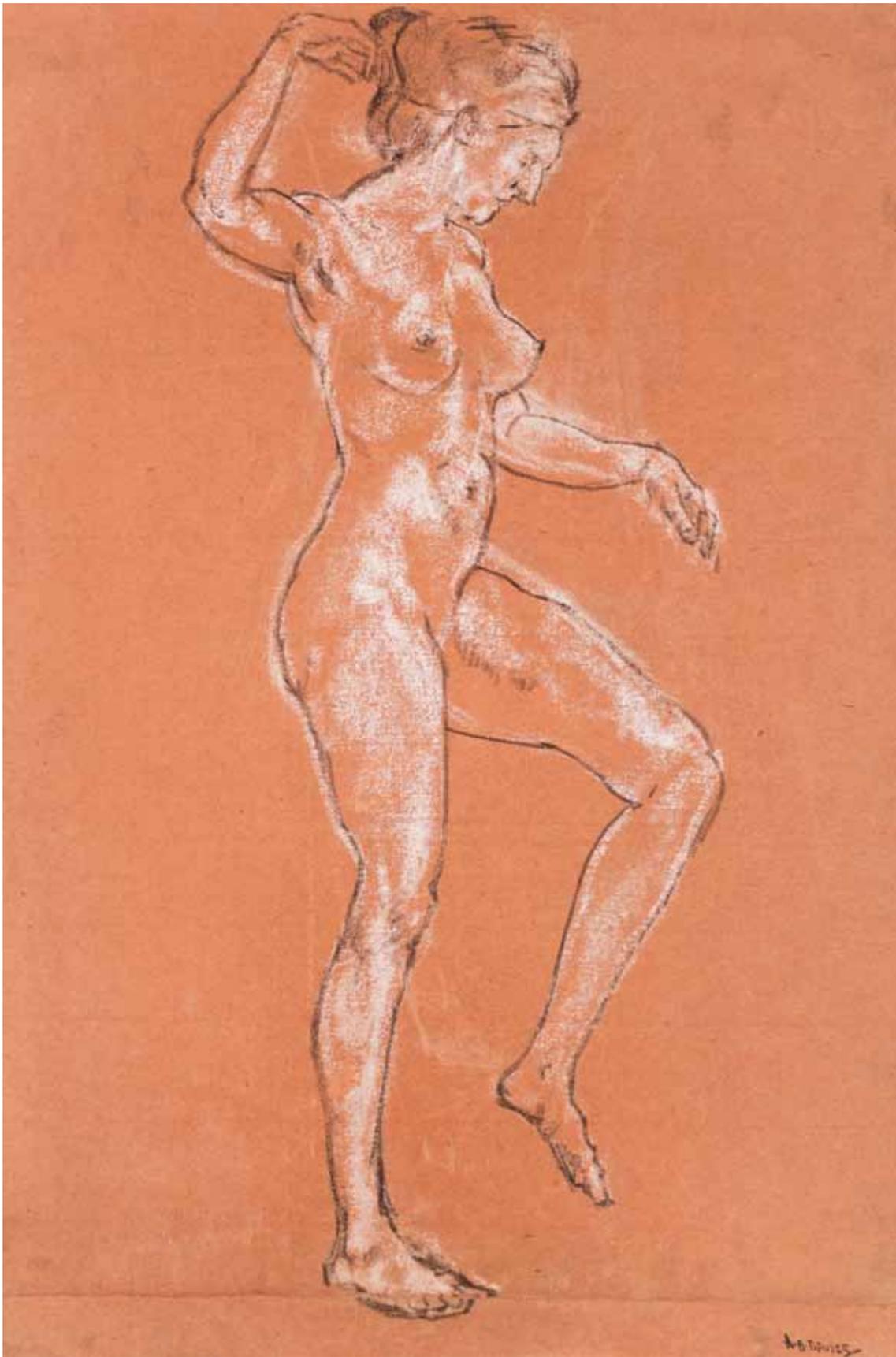
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Reclining Nude*, 1908, pastel on paper, 9 x 13  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Gift of Mr. C. N. Bliss Jr., through the Macbeth Gallery, 1942



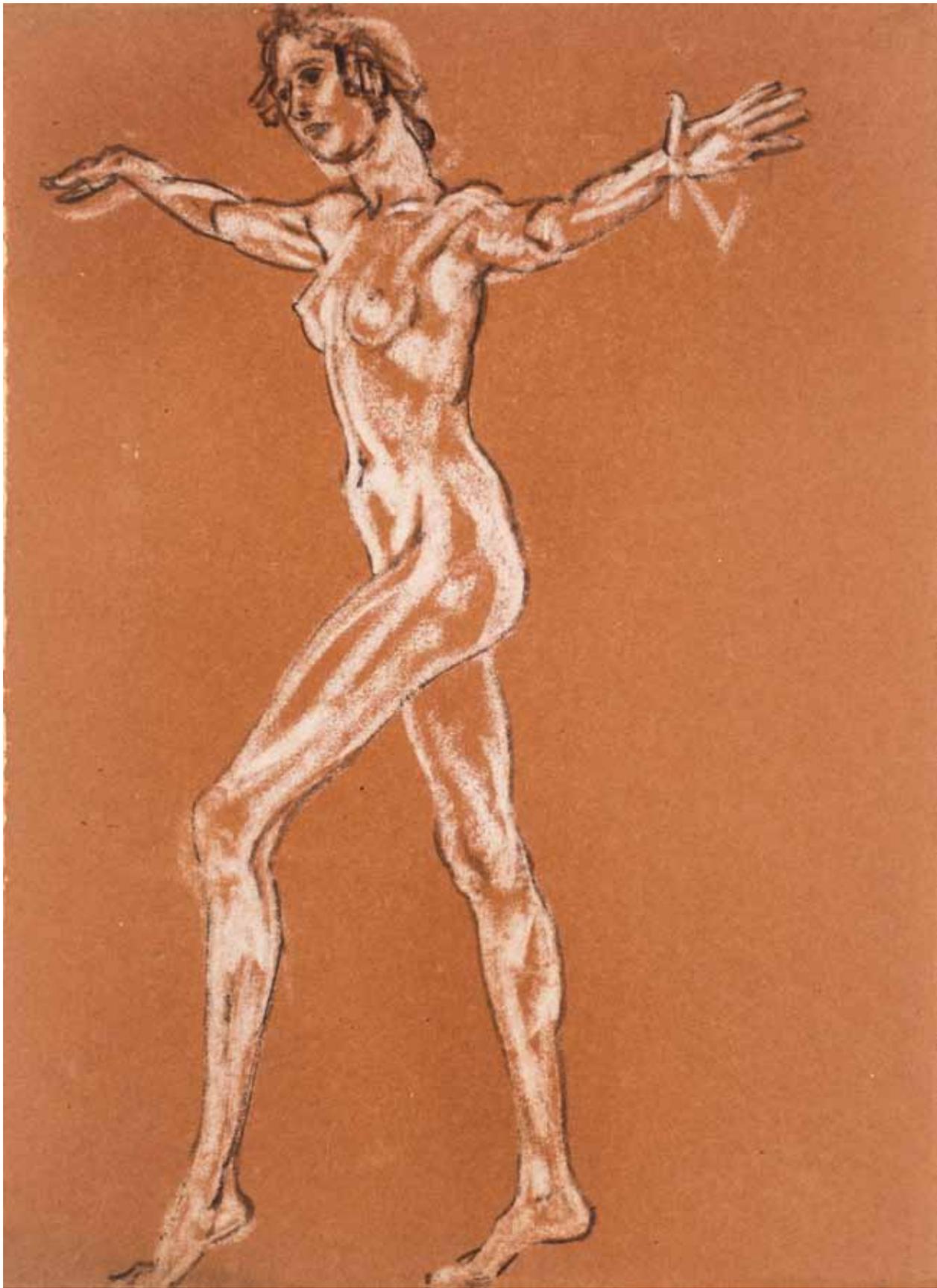
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Sketch for Sleep*, c. 1908, pastel on paper, 12 x 16  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



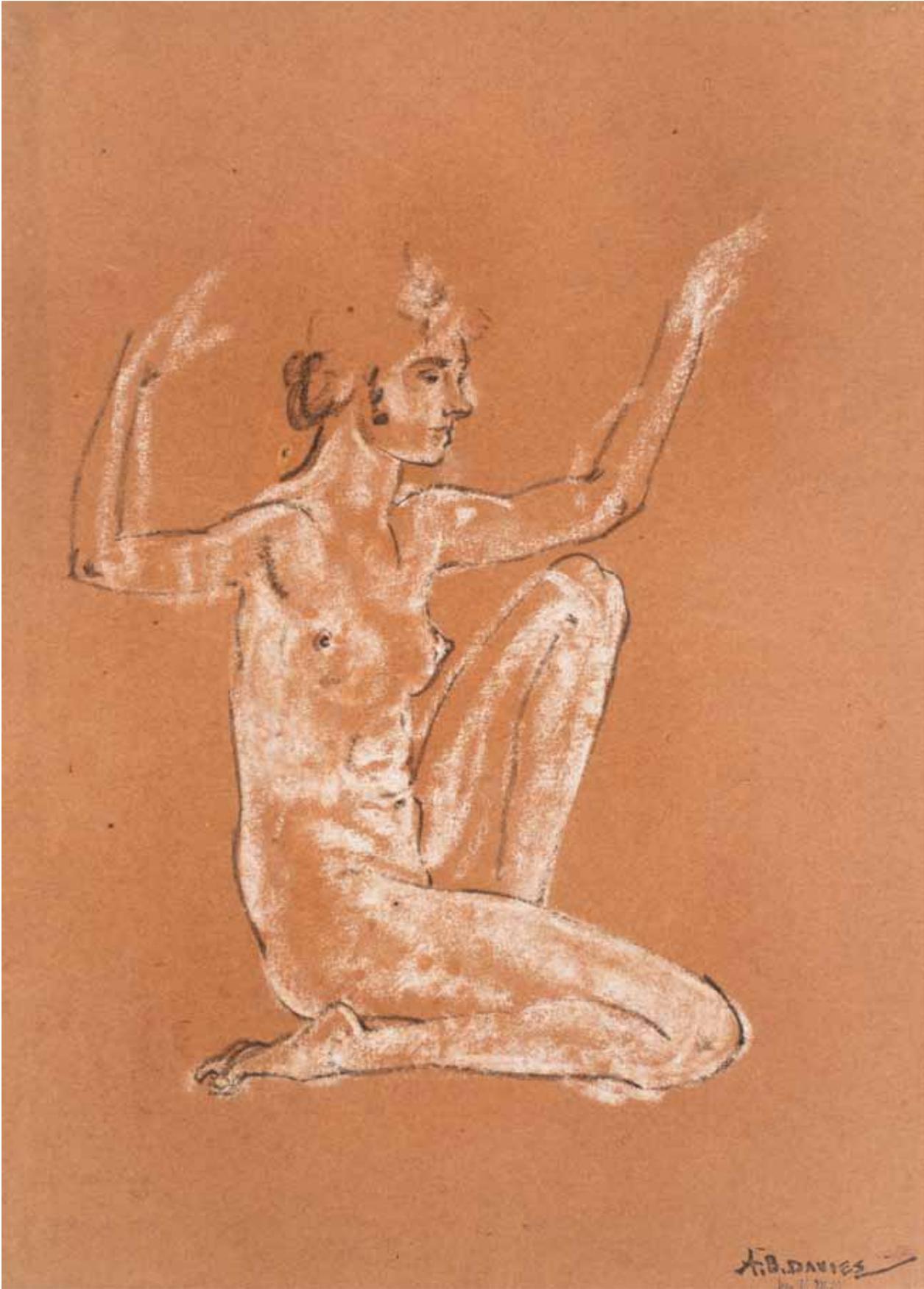
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Bust of a Woman*, 1920, chalk on paper, 8  $\frac{5}{16}$  x 7  $\frac{1}{16}$  in.  
Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Nude Lifting Knee), n.d., pastel on paper, 19 ¼ x 13 ½ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Dancing Nude), n.d., pastel on paper, 18 x 13 ¼ in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, Untitled (Kneeling Nude), n.d., pastel on paper, 18 x 13 in. Courtesy of Mac Cosgrove-Davies



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Mars and Venus*, n.d., chalk on paper, 23  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 45  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Gift of Mrs. A. Conger Goodyear, 1952



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Nude Female Figures*, n.d., chalk on paper, 22 x 42 in. each image Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949





Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Constellations [I]*, ca. 1922-1923, chalk on paper, 21  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 49  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Constellations [II]*, ca.1922-1923, chalk on paper, 22  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 49  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAMOUS INTERNATIONAL  
**ARMORY SHOW 1913**



RE-CREATED IN THE ORIGINAL ARMORY  
LEXINGTON AVENUE AND 25TH STREET, NEW YORK  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT

**APRIL 6-28, 1963**

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY 12-10 PM  
SATURDAY, SUNDAY 1 PM-6 PM

Marcel Duchamp, 1887-1968, 50th Anniversary of the Famous International Armory Show 1913, 1963, offset color lithograph on cardboard, edition of 200, 42 ½ x 26 ¾ in. Gift of Mary D. Oliver '66, 1997

GALLERY 5

# ARTHUR B. DAVIES

PAINTINGS FROM THE RANDOLPH COLLEGE COLLECTION

Illustrated Checklist



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Achaea*, ca. 1917, oil on canvas, 18 ¼ x 30 ⅙ in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949

All his life Davies had a love for ancient Greece, the Greece of the classics, and he visited that country several times. Since he took trips that were often up to six months in length, and he traveled under the assumed name of Davies A. Owen to conceal his identity and whereabouts, it is impossible to document the exact dates and locations of his visits. It seems unlikely that Davies visited Greece during the First World War, and therefore the date this particular work was completed is not certain. Dating is further complicated by the fact that the painting was illustrated in a 1918 catalogue, yet in the artist's memorial exhibition of 1930, it appeared under the present title with a date of 1920.

Davies, who had been engaged in figural painting for a number of years, started to take up the landscape again in the late 1910s. In these later watercolors, pastels, and oils, including the one shown here, the human element so central to his earlier works is usually absent. Careful attention was paid to the large banks of clouds, and the foreground was subordinated to the dominant group of hills or mountains that flow and undulate like waves, lacking specific detail or a sense of a particular place. While Davies' experiments with cubism seem to have been put aside, something about these works still seems more abstract than those produced before his experiences with the Armory Show. It seems obvious that modernism continued to have an effect on his later work.



*Nixie*, 1893, oil on canvas, 6 x 4 in. Gift of Mrs. Robert W. Macbeth, 1950

This painting, the earliest Davies work in the Randolph College collection, represents the first of the major periods in his career. In this type of painting, one or more nude young women sit, stroll, or stand, but there is not action and little or no movement. The figure in *Nixie* is also typical of his work of the 1890s in that no real structure – no bones or sinew – supports the human form, as if to suggest that the young woman has yet to form her physical or sexual identity. Several of the best-known paintings in this group of works show young women in the company of a unicorn or sometimes a horse, and the traditional sexual connotations of the virgin are clear. The figure in *Nixie*, however, is no different in her dream-like state, her soft, undeveloped womanhood, and the indistinct setting in which she exists. Davies certainly based many of his compositions on his dreams. (Near his bed, he kept a pad on which he noted his thoughts when he awoke.)

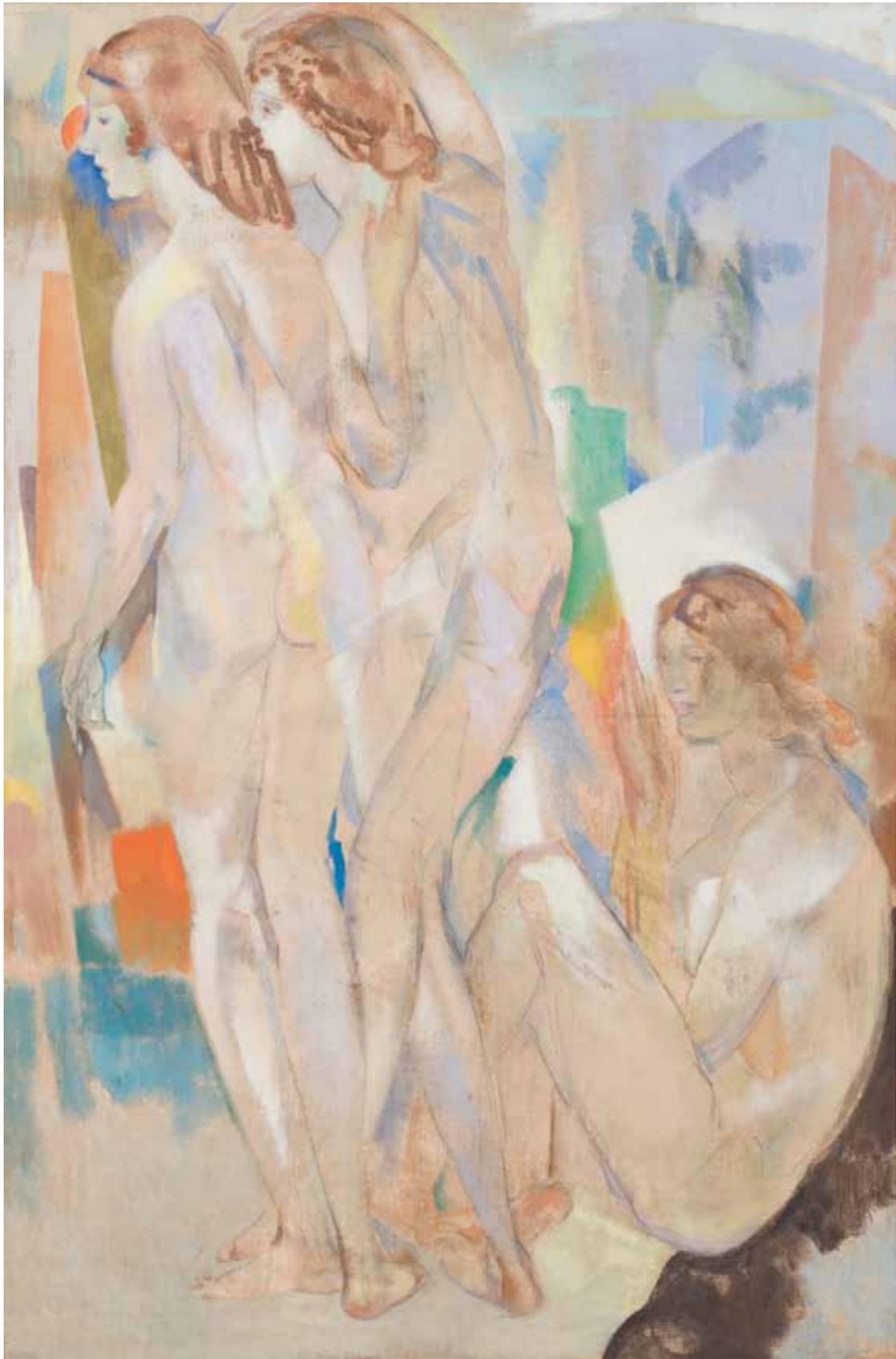
Technically, the artist's modeling recalls such Venetian masters as Giorgione and Titian, and both the glazing and heavy varnish coat he used exaggerate that identification. Given his reliance on symbolism and his shared interest in classical antiquity, Davies perhaps had additional reason to adopt some of those earlier stylistic and technical effects, and to identify with those sixteenth century masters.



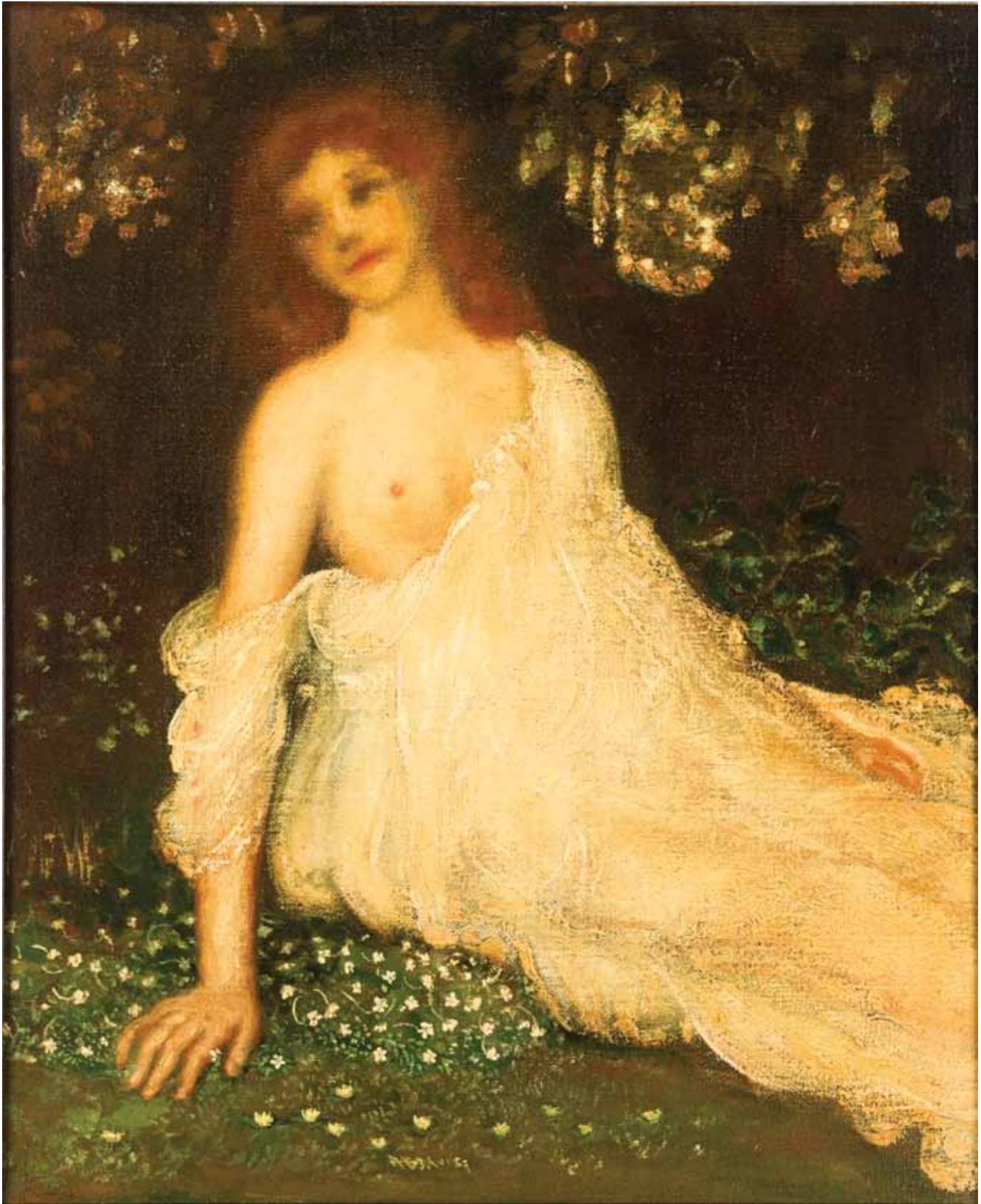
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *An Olympiad*, n.d., oil on board, 10  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{16}$  in. Gift of Mrs. William Macbeth, 1950



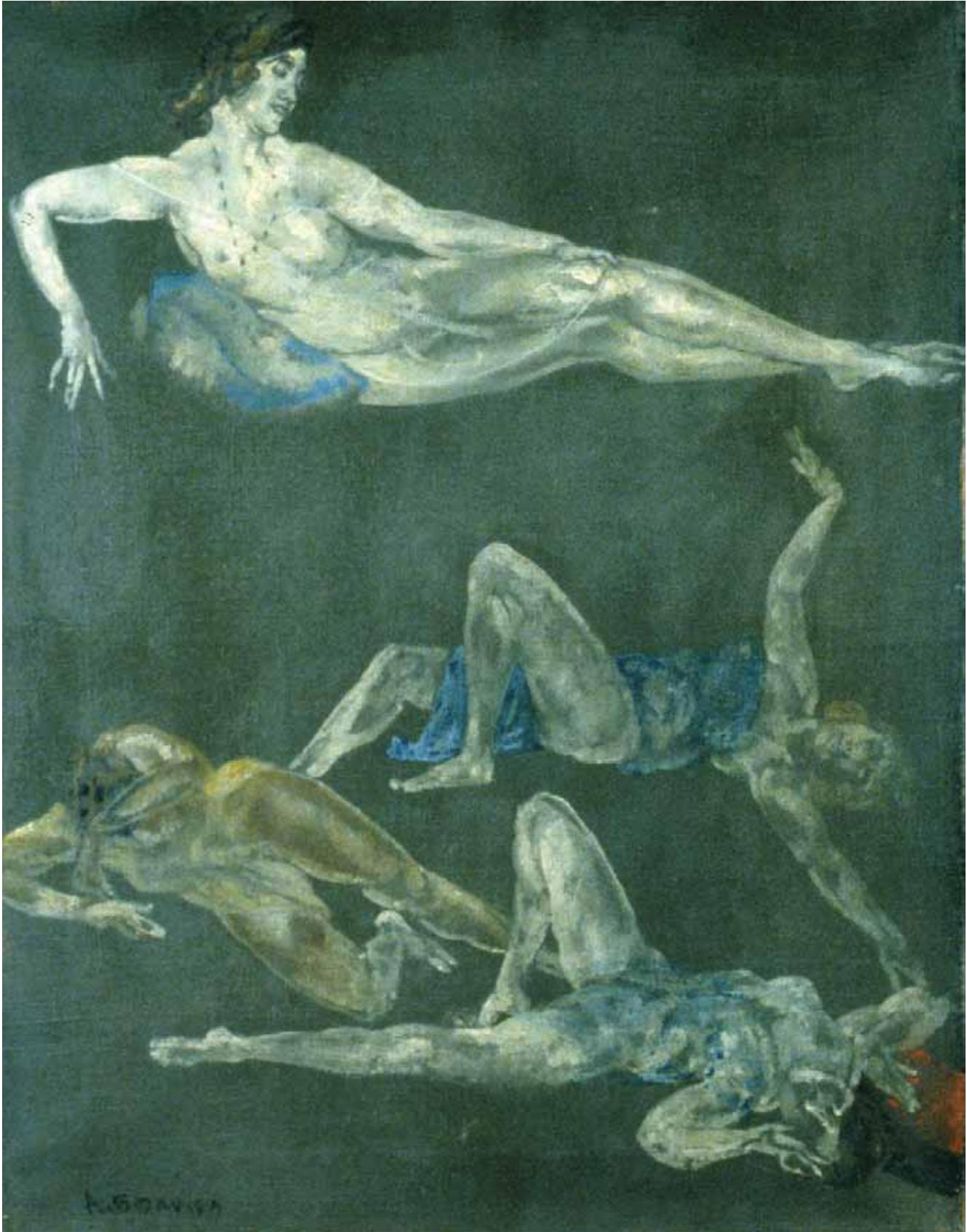
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Connecticut River Valley*, n.d., oil on panel, 5  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 9  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Robert W. Macbeth, 1950



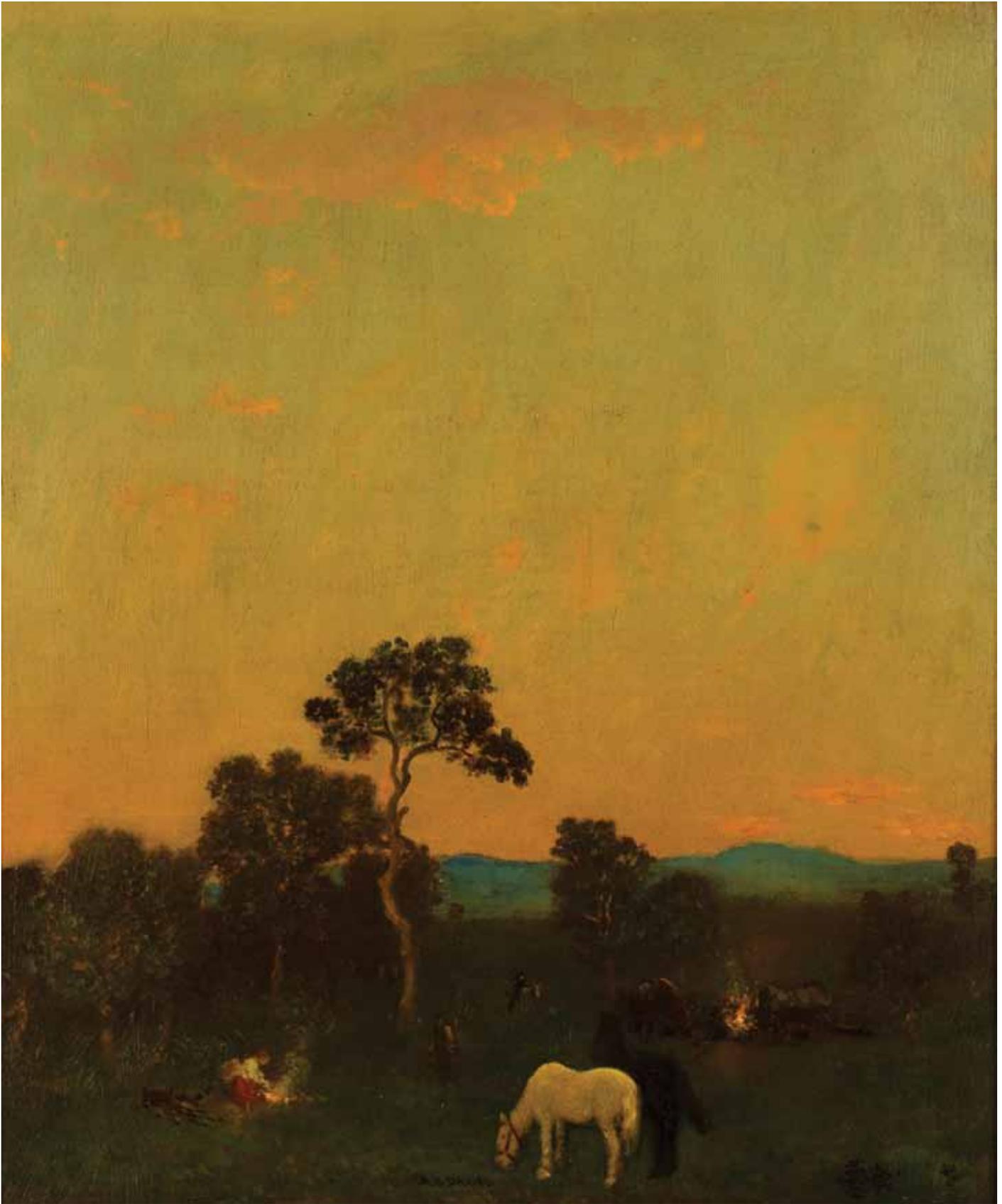
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Decoration*, ca. 1918, oil on canvas, 58 x 38  $\frac{7}{16}$  in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Flora*, 1900, oil on canvas, 16 x 13 ¼ in. Gift of Mrs. William Macbeth, 1950



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Four Dancing Figures*, 1924, oil on canvas, 22 1/6 x 17 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Gypsy Encampment in the Ramapo Hills*, 1896, oil on panel, 13 1/16 x 11 1/4 in. Gift of Mrs. Robert W. Macbeth, 1950



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Long Island Shore*, n.d., oil on panel, 4  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 9  $\frac{1}{16}$  in. Gift of Mrs. William Macbeth, 1950



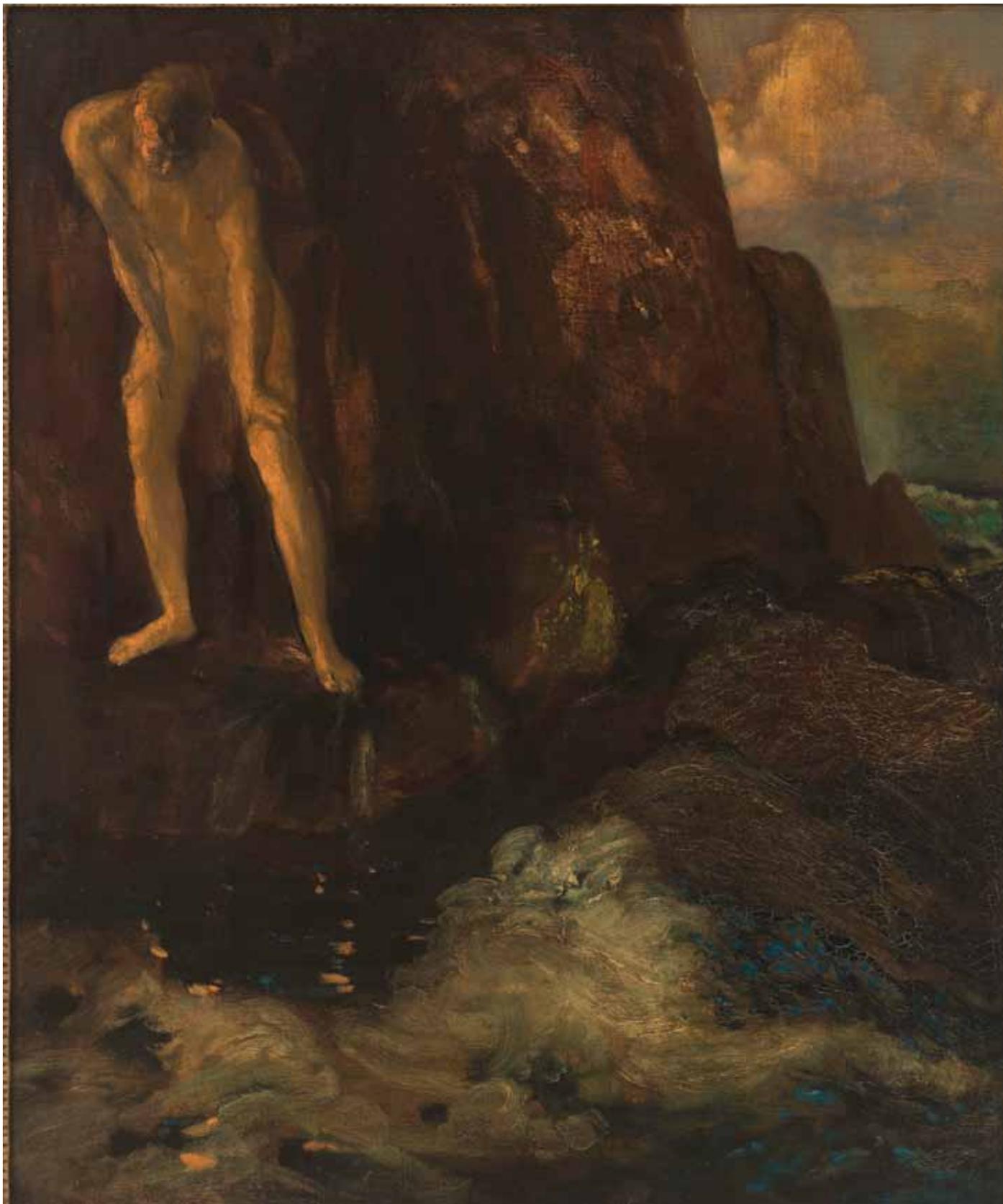
Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Music in the Fields*, 1895, oil on canvas, 20  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 8  $\frac{3}{16}$  in.  
Gift of Mrs. Robert W. Macbeth, 1950



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *On Hampstead Heath*, n.d., oil on canvas, 7 ½ x 12 ½ in. Gift of Mrs. William Macbeth, 1950



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Pastoral*, n.d., oil on board, 8 x 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Gift of Mrs. William Macbeth, 1950



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Primitive Man*, 1903, oil on canvas, 28 ¼ x 23 in. Gift of Mrs. A. Conger Goodyear, 1952



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Star in the North*, n.d., oil on canvas, 8 1/8 x 20 1/8 in. Gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, Jr., 1949



Arthur B. Davies, 1862-1928, *Sweet Ariel Clouds*, n.d., oil on panel, 6 ¼ x 10 ½ in. Gift of Mrs. William Macbeth, 1950



PHOTOS BY ANDREW WILDS

<i>Achaea</i>	<i>Queen of Dusk</i>
<i>Amber Garden</i>	<i>Reclining Nude</i>
<i>Amber Garden</i>	<i>Recurrence</i>
<i>Amber Garden</i>	<i>Sketch for "Do Reverence"</i>
<i>An Eddy in Stream</i>	<i>Sketch for "Sleep"</i>
<i>An Olympiad</i>	<i>Sketch for "Tiptoeing Youth"</i>
<i>Angled Beauty</i>	<i>Star in the North</i>
<i>Bathers</i>	<i>Supplication</i>
<i>Bust of a Woman</i>	<i>Sweet Ariel Clouds</i>
<i>By the River</i>	<i>The Temple</i>
<i>By The Sea</i>	<i>The Temple</i>
<i>Circling Doves</i>	<i>Three Nudes in a Landscape</i>
<i>Connecticut River Valley</i>	<i>Toil of Three</i>
<i>Constellations [I]</i>	<i>Two Nude Figures</i>
<i>Constellations [II]</i>	<i>Two Nudes with Tree</i>
<i>Crouching and Kneeling Nude Woman</i>	Untitled (Dancing Nude)
<i>Decoration</i>	Untitled (Dancing Woman)
<i>Emma #3</i>	Untitled (Four Dancers)
<i>Floating Figures</i>	Untitled (Kneeling Nude)
<i>Floating Figures</i>	Untitled (Kneeling Woman)
<i>Floating Figures</i>	Untitled (Male Torso)
<i>Flora</i>	Untitled (Male with Bear)
<i>Four Dancing Figures</i>	Untitled (Nude Balancing)
<i>Gypsy Encampment in the Ramapo Hills</i>	Untitled (Nude Balancing on One Foot)
<i>Iris</i>	Untitled (Nude Lifting Knee)
<i>Long Island Shore</i>	Untitled (Nude Male with Drape)
<i>Lunette</i>	Untitled (Nude Sketch)
<i>Margaret</i>	Untitled (Nude with Drape)
<i>Mars &amp; Venus</i>	Untitled (Nude with Red Hair)
<i>Morning Quiet</i>	Untitled (Portrait)
<i>Music in the Fields</i>	Untitled (Profile Portrait)
<i>Nixie</i>	Untitled (Reaching Male)
<i>Nude Female Figures</i>	Untitled (Seated Nude)
<i>On Hampstead Heath</i>	Untitled (Sleeping Nude)
<i>Pastoral</i>	Untitled (Supplication)
<i>Potentia</i>	Untitled (Supplication) bronze
<i>Primitive Man</i>	

CATALOGUE DESIGN by Janet Fletcher,  
Studio 5 Graphics, Lynchburg, Virginia.

PRINTED by Meridian Printing,  
East Greenwich, Rhode Island





ISBN 978-1-62407-690-9



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