



Lions and Eagles and Bulls: Early American Tavern and Inn Signs

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Proud lions, patriotic eagles, and solemn bulls--not to mention prancing horses, majestic oak trees, and festive table settings--graced the roadsides of colonial America. Painted onto wooden signboards and hung above the heads of passers-by, these colorful images communicated critical information, enabling local residents and travelers to find their way to commercial enterprises and civic gatherings. These signs, as they evolved from the eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth century, documented the radical shift from a premodern agricultural society to the entrepreneurial, market-driven, and increasingly urban economy of the early Republic.

Handsomely illustrated with over seventy color plates, this catalogue--published in collaboration with a major traveling exhibition--features works from the Connecticut Historical Society, which houses the nation's preeminent collection of early American painted signs. Eight essays, written by prominent scholars of American art and cultural history, explore the medium and discuss why these signs are much more than picturesque relics of bygone times. Indeed, this volume reconnects sign paintings to the broad continuum of artistic genres and practices within which they were produced, displayed, and viewed.

An accessible text, illustrated generously throughout, includes an introduction that encourages the reader to engage with sign paintings from a variety of artistic and cultural perspectives including those of vernacular art, commercial art, and visual and material culture. Other essays examine specific aspects of sign paintings: the creative processes of the individual makers, the distinctive techniques and materials used, the development of the profession, the iconography and sources, and the consequences of outdoor installation on aesthetic and cultural meanings. The volume also features a detailed catalogue of the sign paintings in the exhibition and brief biographies of those sign painters that have been documented in Connecticut.

Both building on and recasting the rich legacy of "folk art," *Lions and Eagles and Bulls* provides a wealth of new information about these highly significant and well-loved objects to scholars, collectors, and art-lovers alike.

Contributors to the catalogue include Philip D. Zimmerman, Margaret C. Vincent, Sandra Webber, Alexander Carlisle, Nancy Finlay, Catherine Gudis, Kenneth L. Ames, and Bryan J. Wolf.

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE:

The Connecticut Historical Society,
Hartford, Connecticut,
October-December, 2000

Hood Museum of Art
Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire,
June-September, 2001

The Museums at Stony Brook,
Long Island, New York,
September-December, 2001

Museum of our National Heritage,
Lexington, Massachusetts,
April-October, 2002

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