

Harmony and Power

A retrospective featuring the impressionistic paintings of Rae Sloan Bredin is on view now at the James A. Michener Art Museum

Through July 15

James A. Michener Art Museum

128 S. Pine Street

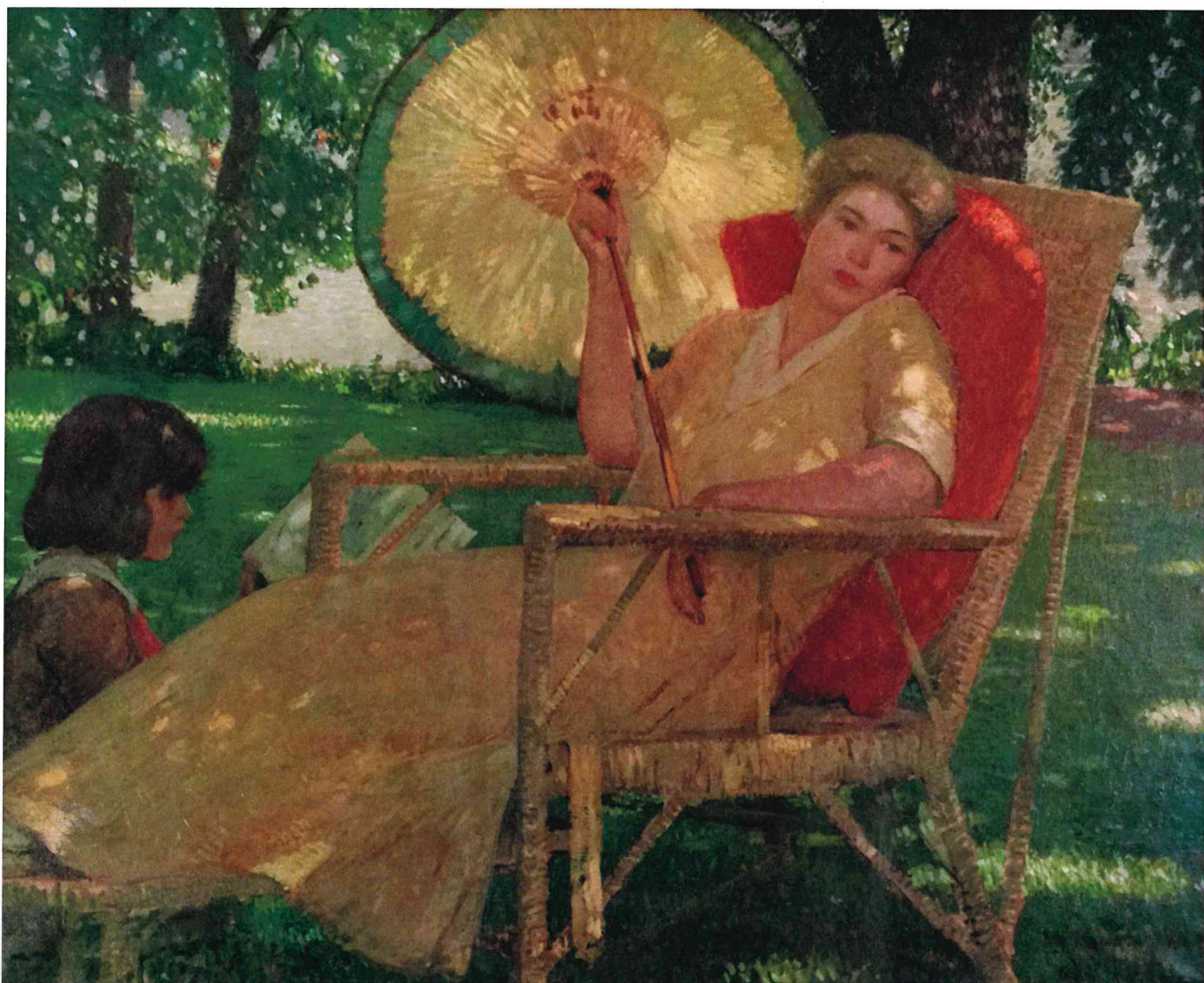
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Located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, less than 30 miles north of Philadelphia, the James A. Michener Art Museum has a rich history in presenting exhibitions of artists of the region. These have included group shows and solo retrospectives of Pennsylvania Impressionists and New Hope Group

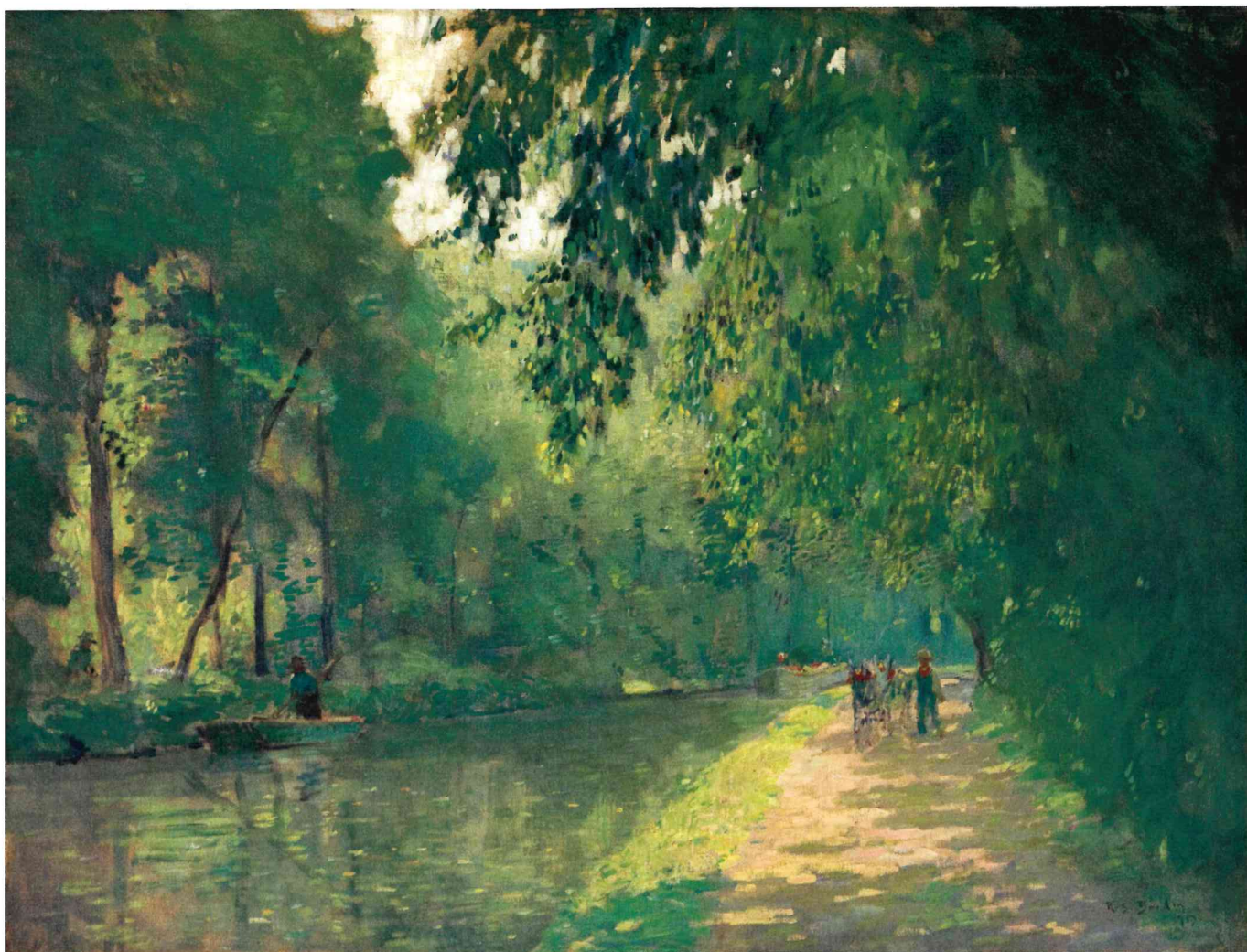
artists. In recent years, the museum's curators have shifted their focus to artists they believe have not been given their due, such as Rae Sloan Bredin (1880–1933), whose work is represented in a solo retrospective for the first time in 85 years. *Rae Sloan Bredin: Harmony and Power*, featuring 46 paintings, will hang through July 15.



Rae Sloan Bredin (1880–1933), *Lawn Shadows* (alternatively titled *Girl with Parasol*), 1924. Oil on canvas, 42 x 52 in. Private collection.



Rae Sloan Bredin (1880-1933), *The Little Bridesmaid* (alternatively titled *Portrait of Jean and Flower Girl*), 1925. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in. Kathy and Ted Fernberger.



Rae Sloan Bredin (1880-1933), *After the Rain*, ca. 1913. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. James A. Michener Art Museum. Museum purchase funded by the Mandel Society for Art Acquisition, the Beveridge Moore and Henry Morof Trust, and John C. Seegers.

"Bredin is fascinating because he died so young; he was 52. He produced at a slower rate than his peers, and there is a smaller group of artwork to choose from," says the museum's assistant curator Louise Feder, who curated the show. "Most of them are in private collections. We had to make sure his descendants were all on board so the show could happen. It was such a joy to work on because the family was such good independent researchers. They knew so much about his history and carefully guarded his papers. It was three years in the making for me, and it's the first real significant solo show of his work since his memorial exhibition."

Moving to New Hope around 1913, Bredin became a fixture within the small community and only more so immersed into the scene when he married Alice Price, sister of artist Mary Elizabeth Price. Bredin was enamored by the idyllic world he found along the Delaware River, with the settings—often filled with people at the riverside—becoming his subjects



Rae Sloan Bredin (1880-1933), *Nude with Blue Kimono*. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in. Collection of Carola and Louis Della Penna.



Rae Sloan Bredin (1880-1933), *Lawn Fete* (alternatively titled *Lawn* and *The Lawn*), ca. 1920. Oil on canvas, 40 x 48 in. Private collection.

as well as formal portraits and interiors.

This inclusion of the figure, Feder says, is what made Bredin's work unique among the other Pennsylvania Impressionists, who tended to focus solely on the landscape. She elaborates, "He is so different because while he's a big part of this group socially and professionally, his work primarily deals with the figure. Others in the New Hope arts colony deal with the landscape, but Bredin made most of his living being a portraitist. It's an aberration to get to see what the people living along the river were like."

In the museum's holdings is one work by Bredin—the figural landscape *After the Rain*. The painting, as Feder explains, was likely completed in the artist's first few years in the area and allows the viewer

to see his introduction to that world. The work is filled with the luscious green forestry, as well as a pathway where figures walk in the distance.

Living along the Delaware Canal on a property called "Lawn Shadows," the artist often painted the parties he hosted on the grounds as well as the daily life of his family—wife Alice and their children. Among the works of the backyard is *Lawn Shadows*, alternatively titled *Girl with Parasol*, from 1924, that shows a woman lounging on a chair while a young girl sits on the grass reading. In another work, *Lawn Fete*—also titled *Lawn* and *The Lawn*—Bredin captures a party happening on his property, encapsulating the very time and place through the dress and atmosphere.

Another key work in the show is *The*

Little Bridesmaid, which also has been called *Portrait of Jean* and *Flower Girl*. The work is of the artist's daughter Jean from when she was in a local wedding. "It's a tender portrait," says Feder. "It shows Bredin's true mastery of portraits and interiors, and it shows his technical skills and sensitivity to expression. It gives her a real presence and shows her reverence of the role she is in."

As a whole, the exhibition can be thought of as a rediscovery of the region and the artist himself. "Bredin came [to the Delaware Valley] and fell in love with the landscape and everything that went along with New Hope," says Feder, "but because of the way his paintings have gone into private collections, he hasn't become a household name." ■