



John Gadsby Chapman: America's First Artist-Etcher. With a Catalogue of his Italian Etchings

John F. McGuigan Jr., Mary K. McGuigan

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John Gadsby Chapman (1808-1889) was one of nineteenth-century America's most original and influential artists, and he is deservedly well regarded today for his paintings, drawings, book illustrations, and writing. In contrast, his accomplishments as America's first artist-etcher—that is to say, the first to design and execute his own etchings—have been largely overlooked until now. This monograph is the first to appear on the Virginia-born Chapman for more than half a century and the first ever to consider the totality of his etching career and situate it within the broader context of his personal life and painting practice. Readers familiar with Chapman's mural *The Baptism of Pocahontas in the U.S. Capitol*, his more than 1,400 designs for Harper Brothers' landmark *Illuminated Bible* (1846), his *American Drawing-Book* (1847), and oeuvre of Grand Tour paintings will be delighted to learn more about his prolonged commitment to fine art etching. The full-color volume includes an illustrated catalogue of forty-three original etchings of Italian subjects that Chapman produced over a span of more than fifty years, from his student days in Rome from 1828 to 1830 to his lengthy residence in Italy from 1849 to 1881, and includes four that he made after paintings by his sons John Linton Chapman (1839-1905) and Conrad Wise Chapman (1842-1910). Sixty-nine figures and gorgeous full-page details complement the text and augment our understanding of the Chapman family of painters. The present study will be of note to anyone interested in international 19th-century print culture and is especially timely and relevant in light of recent scholarship that seeks to redress the teleological tendency to privilege photography as the modern, authoritative standard against which all reproductive media are measured.

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