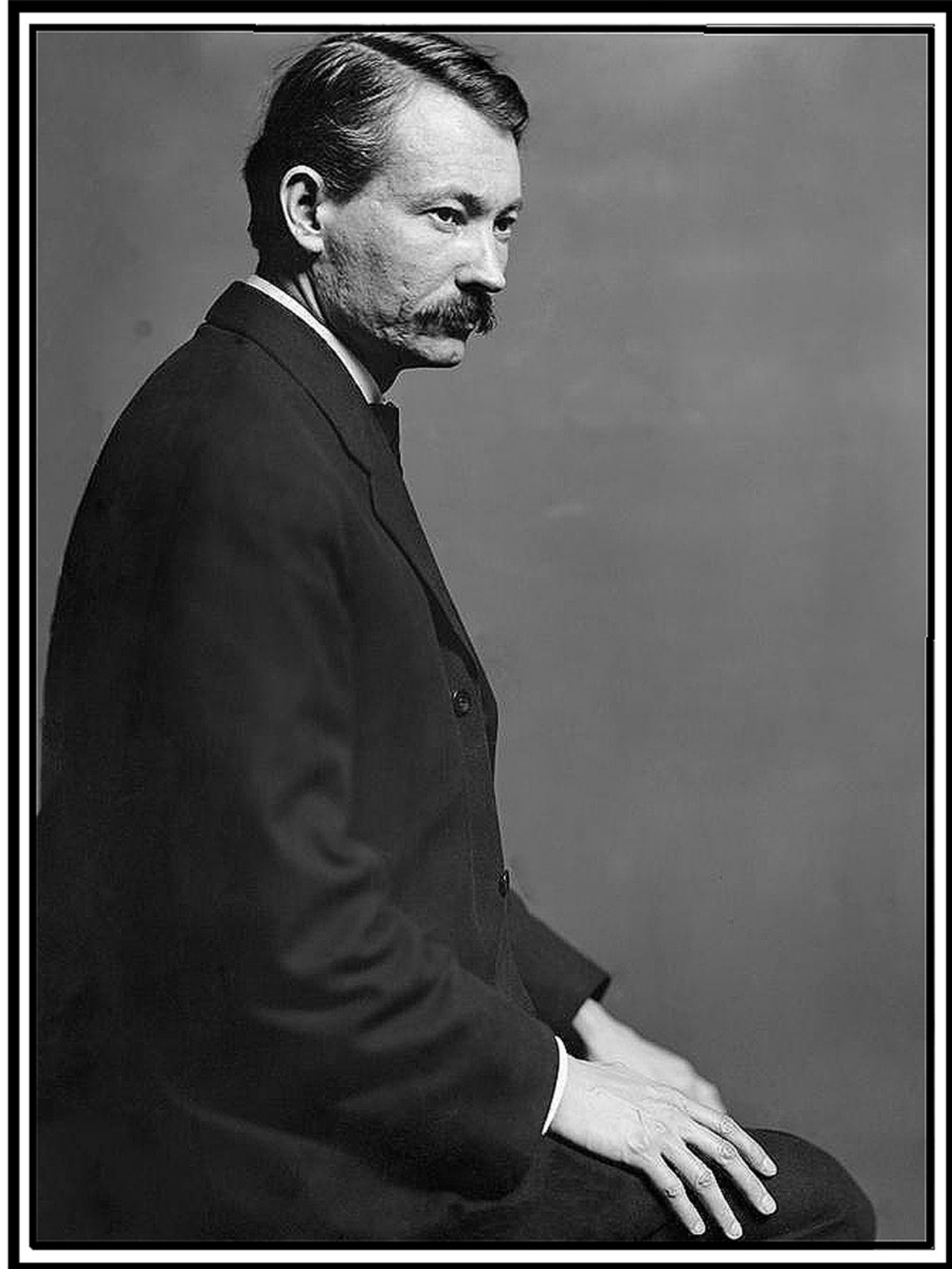


THE CAREER AND WORK OF ROBERT HENRI

And His Many Activities As a Leader in Art



ROBERT HENRI

From the portrait by Gertrude Kasebier

SOME artists are solitaires, doing their work almost in secret, and regarding the presence of other craftsmen as a nuisance and a hindrance. Others love to have those about them who are sympathetic and similarly minded. Robert Henri belongs to the second class. "Pupil of Henri" is a designation which certain of our most successful young painters are proud to boast of. Nor do they drop it when they have passed out of the schools and into the Academy. Quite on the contrary, those who were once his pupils continue to be his disciples, which is a great tribute to his abiding influence.

It is perhaps owing to this quality in him that he has been so active in what might be called the public affairs of art. Largely through his efforts, the union of the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists was brought about.

ON many occasions he showed his disregard of the theory of some Academicians that what their incorporated body does is no concern of the public. With a firm and fearless hand, and at the risk of many friendships, he drew aside the curtain that conceals the doings of the art jury-room. Welcomed himself as an exhibitor, and distinctly a gifted and admired and popular painter, he threw his influence on the side of men who were not popular, men whose works the judges would not or could not understand. Once he threatened to withdraw a painting of his own because that of a youthful rival of his was rejected.

Henri is usually cosmopolitan in his choice of subjects. He has roamed in his search for types from Monhegan to Spain, and from Spain to Western Ireland. Perhaps, owing to his devotion to the works of the great Spaniards of the past, he feels most at home in the country of Velasquez, and Murillo, and Goya.

He does not sympathize with artists who throw their work in the face of the public with a "There, take it or leave it." Indeed, he has an almost hieratic belief in the power of the fine arts, not merely to delight, but to improve, to uplift and to educate the masses.

WHILE the famous Armory Show of 1913 was going on, he showed his attitude on this subject by a single remark. He said, "I am sorry that this exhibition could not be continued forever." As that was manifestly impossible, he threw himself with energy into the MacDowell Club's artistic schemes, and became the ruling spirit of the club's many artistic enterprises.