

The group of artists later known as “The Eight” formed in 1907 to protest against the restrictive exhibition policies of the New York-based National Academy of Design. At the core of this band of predominantly realist painters was a group of newspaper-trained artist-journalists who had cut their teeth working as illustrators for the Philadelphia press. William Glackens, George Luks, John Sloan, and Everett Shinn met in the night classes, known as “the Charcoal Club,” taught by the charismatic Robert Henri, who was at that time an instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Henri introduced the “Philadelphia Gang,” as they came to be known, to the work of Goya, Hals, Velasquez, and the early “Spanish” period of Manet, exhorting his young followers to “go out into the streets and look at life.” These masters of the quick sketch were threatened by the advent of newspaper photography and, under the tutelage of the inspirational Henri, they graduated from the printing press to serious painting. These artists came together again as part of a rebellious independent group, now joined by Maurice Prendergast, Ernest Lawson, and Arthur B. Davies, for a groundbreaking exhibition held in February 1908 at the Macbeth Galleries in New York. Although the show received some negative criticism, it was a sensational success, attracting huge crowds and generating several sales. The Eight (who were not dubbed the Ashcan school until 1934) introduced a healthy vitality into American art through their uncompromising belief in artistic independence.

the Eight

Arthur B. Davies

William Glackens

Robert Henri

Ernest Lawson

George B. Luks

Maurice B. Prendergast

Everett Shinn

John Sloan