



Robert Winthrop Chanler: Discovering the Fantastic

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In collaboration with Miami's Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, a rediscovery of a lost figure of American modernism—the early-twentieth-century American painter born into the Astor family, whose imagination and patrician clientele provide a fascinating artistic and biographical saga.

American modernism is populated with a cast of extraordinary characters, but few were as exuberant as Robert Winthrop Chanler, who made his artistic reputation with exotic and brilliantly colored lacquered screens and architectural interiors whose compositions feature fantastical avian, jungle, and aquatic creatures, many overlaid with iridescent metallic finishes. Chanler painted what entertained and interested him, while attracting wealthy Gilded Age patrons and earning popular and critical acclaim at numerous exhibitions—including the 1905 Salon d'Automne, the show featuring paintings by “les fauves,” with Henri Matisse as their leader; and the legendary “International Exhibition of Modern Art” in New York City, popularly known as the 1913 Armory Show. But, despite such a prolific career and a fascinating body of work, Chanler quickly became an obscure figure after his death in 1930.

Robert Winthrop Chanler: Discovering the Fantastic is the first comprehensive examination in more than eighty years of an artist who straddled the divide between fine and decorative art, defined notions of originality and authorship during the birth of American modernism, and posthumously challenges twenty-first century preservationists through his idiosyncratic techniques and unorthodox material choices.

Co-published with Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, which preserves Chanler's fantastic undersea mural on the swimming pool grotto ceiling of the historic estate, the book includes essays that explore major commissions and conservation issues, all illustrated with new color photography, as well as a chronology and exhibition history, making this the definitive study on an indelible American modernist.

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