Proposal for a Portrait of Yale's First Women PhDs
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I am submitting a 72 x 59-inch study in pencil on paper for the portrait of Yale's first women PhDs. This drawing is the foundation for a proposed oil painting of the same size. Using my typical working method of underpainting, overpainting, and glazing, I will further develop the psychological content as well as light and pictorial space through the painting process. The colors in the painting will refer to color found in Sterling Memorial Library.

The image is a large-scale composition in which all seven women, each with an object representing her field of study, are assembled around a table. While the image can be seen as allegorical, the women are depicted as individuals with emotional depth. They are attired in clothing and hairstyles characteristic of their socioeconomic class in 1894. I selected the symbolic objects for their historical accuracy and their function in the composition. The women's gazes and the arrangement of the objects create patterns that guide the viewer's eye in the rectangle. Laura Wylie, who faces outward, interrogates viewers while inviting them into the scene, much like the surgeon in the back row of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*. Margaretta Palmer's telescope energizes the composition with a strong diagonal. A sweeping gesture by an object is found in many of the strongest group portraits in the history of painting, including Geri-Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa*, Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, Caravaggio's *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*, and Zurbarán's *The Death of Saint Bonaventura*. The figures will be bathed in

a single, unifying light source created by the application of tinted glazes. The lighting will balance the relationship among the figures and make each equally important.

Before I began this composition, significant research was required. First I needed to establish a likeness for each of the women. The materials provided by the Yale Women's Faculty Forum were useful but inconsistent. For instance, there were many wonderful photos of Laura Johnson Wylie in different phases of her life but no photos of Sara Rogers, and the image of Margaretta Palmer lacked detail. The women were between 29 and 44 when they earned their degrees, while in the photos most of them are shown at vastly different ages.

My first discovery was Sara Bulkley Rogers's male pseudonym—Schuyler Shelton—along with her novel published under that name, *Life's Way* (1897), about the difficult choice between love and art and the struggles and sacrifices that young women faced in the mid-1890s. This finding informed the image by establishing Rogers as a keen observer of her fellow students and of human nature in general. It confirmed my decision to depict Rogers turning toward Mary Augusta Scott, as if to listen. My second important discovery was a high-resolution image of Margaretta Palmer, whom I made a central figure in the composition. After collecting extensive information, I began individual portrait sketches of each woman, correcting the hairstyle and adjusting the age, the attitude, and the gaze.

The next challenge was the composition, which required knowledge of body language for the poses. Although online there are countless photos of women in the late nineteenth century, they were generally not useful to me because of their formality and stiffness. An exception was the photos of Alice Austen (1866–1952). Austen captured over eight thousand images of everything around her, noting the date of each shot. They include candid shots taken among her circle of accomplished women and her experiments with motion photography.

By looking at depictions of women in the paintings of John Singer Sargent, Thomas Eakins, Mary Cassatt, and William Merritt Chase, I imagined how women carried themselves and how they interacted in a variety of situations. From this material I made hundreds of small paper cutouts of figures that suggested my seven subjects and began arranging them on a rectangle.

Once the poses were established, I sought the correct clothing for each figure. Having viewed the exhibition *Impression, Fashion, and Modernity* at the

Metropolitan Museum in 2013, I knew that women's fashion changed so rapidly in the late nineteenth century that one could date a photo or painting to the year by the shape of a woman's sleeve. Ariele Elia, assistant curator of costume and textiles at the museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, provided me with useful guidelines and showed me several outfits in

the museum's collection that the Yale women could have worn. At Helen Uffner Vintage Clothing, I used a model and a series of objects to enact the scene, create the poses, and see how the fabrics moved and took the light.
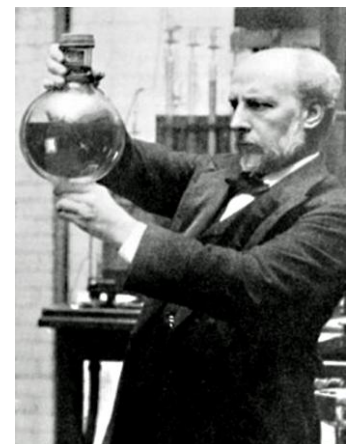
In determining how to portray Margaretta Palmer, who was a student of Maria Mitchell's at Vassar, I took cues from two sources: a photo of Mitchell posing with her telescope in 1887 and the image of Edith Min-

turn in Sargent's painting *Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes*. Charlotte F. Roberts is depicted in the same pose that James Dewarher, a chemist and physicist who was her mentor at Cambridge in 1885–86, assumes in a photo. After a lengthy search, I could not uncover any photos of Sara Bulkley Rogers, a fact that may speak to who she was. Hence, I show her turning away from the viewer and toward Mary Augusta Scott. Her body is informed by a figure in Alice Austen's

1892 photo *Card Game*. Rogers holds a manuscript on which her pseudonym, Schuyler

Shelton, is legible. Mary Augusta Scott, whose dissertation was entitled *The Elizabethan Drama, Especially in Its Relation to the Italians of the Renaissance*, is seated with a model of the Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's time before her, wearing a blouse worn by Laura Johnson Wylie in a photo. Because Wylie was a critic and visionary, I depict her with an 1893 Daugherty typewriter, the first modern typewriter. I derived her costume and pose from a photo of her with her partner, Gertrude Buck.

The knight's helmet on Elizabeth Deering Hanscom's lap symbolizes her dissertation on the Middle English poem *Piers Plowman*. Cornelia Hephzibah Bulkley Rogers was an expert in Old Spanish as well as Italian and French. Seated in a chair designed by Carlo Bugatti around 1890, she holds a copy of *El Cid*, the subject of her dissertation, which she wrote in Spanish. I am considering redrawing her face with spectacles but will need to do further research.

The painting that I propose will be timelessly relevant—enduring in its style, its vivid depictions, and its intense psychology. It will harmonize with the architecture of Sterling Memorial Library and be in scale with the neighboring paintings, while catching the visitor's eye and demanding attention. It will inspire curiosity about these seven remarkable women and tell a story.