



Alice Barber Stephens

Title

The Woman in Business

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1897

Dimensions

25 × 18 in. (63.5 × 45.7 cm)

Accession number

82.12

Credit Line

Acquisition made possible by Ray and Beverly Sacks, 1982

Web Description

Alice Barber Stephens was one of the most prolific women

artists of her day. She was an engraver, painter, and illustrator. She began her training at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (now Moore College of Art). Moving to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, she studied life drawing with Thomas Eakins in 1876 and became a firm supporter of his controversial teaching methods. Her work regularly appeared in magazines, and throughout her career she illustrated a number of important books, including Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*. She was also a teacher and, along with Emily Sartain, founded the Philadelphia Plastic Club, an arts organization for women. As an illustrator, she demonstrated confident ability in handling a range of subject matter and in creating black and white images for reproduction. *The Woman in Business* is one of a series of six full-page illustrations Stephens painted, collectively titled "The American Woman," commissioned by *Ladies' Home Journal*. In the series, Stephens highlighted the changing roles of women in American society. This illustration depicts a late nineteenth-century shopping scene at Wanamaker's department store in Philadelphia, including women of different social classes and emphasizes the prominent role of women in the workplace. The young girl in the foreground underscores the era's child labor practices.