



Charlotte Harding

Title

Field Day at Vassar

Medium

Charcoal on paper mounted on acid free ragboard

Date

1903

Dimensions

19 × 19 1/4 in. (48.3 × 48.9 cm)

Accession number

72.6.2

Credit Line

Gift of Charlotte A. B. Ganz (artist's daughter), 1972

Web Description

Charlotte Harding's artistic talent was noticeable from an early age, and while still a teenager she was encouraged by a family friend to pursue this interest professionally. Her parents were less enthusiastic but allowed her to apply to the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (now Moore College of Art). She was accepted and earned a scholarship in 1889. It was very difficult for a woman to enter the art profession and the future for women artists was often uncertain. The art organizations and auxiliary groups in Philadelphia at the time were exclusively for men until the founding of the Plastic Club, organized by and for women in 1897. Harding was a founding member of the club, as well as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and was enrolled in Howard Pyle's illustration class at Drexel. She achieved national recognition as an illustrator for her bold graphics, decorative linework and flat color patterns. An illustration for the article "Athletics for College Girls" in "Century" magazine in May 1903, the drawing represents an annual event, first held in 1895, and organized by the Vassar College Athletic Association. Vassar was the first women's college to hold this traditional student athletic competition, and it quickly became a popular part of women's college experience. The two young women depicted running the hurdles in this drawing wear their gym uniforms of voluminous bloomers which, no doubt, made jumping a challenge.