



Violet Oakley

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Title

Lady Sitting on Couch Reading with Dog at her Feet

Medium

Charcoal on beige paper

Date

ca. 1906-1914

Catalogue Number

82.24.5

Credit Line

Gift of the Violet Oakley Memorial Foundation, 1982

Web Description

Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, Violet Oakley was among the leading female students of illustrator Howard Pyle. She attended his classes at the Drexel Institute beginning in 1896, though she also studied at the Art Students' League and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. An incredibly versatile artist comfortable in many media, she worked on ambitiously scaled projects in stained glass design and mural painting, including forty-three murals for the State Capitol building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She had a particular affinity for William Penn and the history of the Quakers, the subject of a thirteen-mural cycle in the Capitol. Oakley was a Christian Scientist, a feminist, and a pacifist, and deeply admired William Penn for his Quaker tenets of nonviolence, religious tolerance, and racial equality, ideals that she also passionately and actively supported. Oakley lived with her close friends, the Elizabeth Shippen Green, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Henrietta Cozens (the only non-artist of the group). The women shared a home, which they named Cogslea (COGS are the initials of Cozens, Oakley, Green and Smith), located in Chestnut Hill, a section of Philadelphia. The woman on the couch in this drawing is likely one of Oakley's housemates, pictured along with her St. Bernard dog named Maximilian Prince of Neuwied, or Prince for short.