



Charlotte Harding

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Title

Basket Ball, Bryn Mawr

Medium

Charcoal on paper backed with illustration board

Date

ca. 1903

Catalogue Number

72.6.1

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. Harding's drawing, which she labeled "Basket Ball" does not represent anything like the sport we know today. While Bryn Mawr did offer women the opportunity to play basketball as early as 1895, Harding seems to have confused the sport with another activity in her drawing. Early women's basketball was played in long skirts as Harding depicts and with far more than the five players per team we know today, but it was an indoor sport. The drawing shows a game played outdoors, on the grass, with no visible court, baskets, or nets. The drawing was used as an illustration for the article "Athletics for College Girls," which appeared in Century magazine in May 1903.