

Picturing Emerson: A Selection of Lifetime Portraits of Ralph Waldo Emerson

In her 2006 article in *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, “*The Tenant is More Than the House*”: *Selected Emerson Portraits in the Concord Free Public Library*, Curator Leslie Perrin Wilson wrote: *Although the basic work of identifying and describing images begs to be done, Emerson iconography is about a good deal more than creator, date, medium, and circumstances of portrait.* Ten years later, that work has been done. The result is a forthcoming book, *Picturing Emerson: An Iconography* (Harvard, summer 2017), co-written by Wilson and Joel Myerson, and an accompanying exhibit, *Picturing Emerson: A Selection of Lifetime Portraits of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, to be held at the Concord Free Public Library Art Gallery. In creating both, Wilson and Myerson attempted to compile the most comprehensive listing of Emerson portraits to date, limiting their choices to original portraits produced during the philosopher’s lifetime.

The exhibit takes viewers chronologically through Emerson’s life, from his earliest portraits during his tenure as a young minister, through his productive middle years, abundant in family, friends, community life, an accumulating body of work, and a growing reputation as America’s first public intellectual. It concludes with his later years, as deepening dementia became visible, his son Edward writing, *Nature gently drew the veil over his eyes; he went to his study and tried to work, accomplished less and less, but did not notice it.*

The exhibit runs from March 7 to May 30, 2017 at the Concord Free Public Library’s Art Gallery, 129 Main Street, Concord, Massachusetts. It is free and open to the public during library hours. For more information see the library’s website at www.concordlibrary.org or call 978-318-3342.

Exhibit Opening

The gala opening will be held on Friday, March 24, 2017 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Library Rotunda. Speakers include authors Joel Myerson and Leslie Perrin Wilson, with brief comments by Margaret Emerson Bancroft. In addition, there will be the performance of selected pieces from the music collection of Ellen Emerson. Light refreshments will be served. If you would like to attend, please R.S.V.P. to Marcy Eckel at 978-318-3355 or meckel@minlib.net.