



John Marin  
American, 1870 - 1953

## *House with Dutch Roof*

c. 1928

oil on canvas board

overall: 20.3 x 25.2 cm (8 x 9 15/16 in.)

Inscription: across upper center reverse: SR#141[the "141" crossed out] 28.23 / (House with Dutch Roof) c. 1928 / 8 x 10;

upper right reverse: NBM 2/21/84; across center reverse: column of various numbers

Gift of John Marin, Jr. 1986.54.3

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### ENTRY

In 1920 John Marin and his wife, Marie, bought a seven-room house at 243 Clark Terrace [fig. 1] in Cliffside Park, a borough in Bergen County, New Jersey. The town was located atop the Hudson Palisades within easy commuting distance of Manhattan. A local reporter described Marin's winter studio there as "a quite matter-of-fact place of work in the rear of his home. It's big, airy and of course has the invaluable north light exposure. Wide windows spread against the wall and through them you can see a lot of the sky over Cliffside Park as well as its nearby backyards." [1] Contrasting with the views he produced every summer in Maine, Marin often painted his unassuming residential neighborhood in New Jersey covered in snow.

Trained as an architect early in his career, Marin was adept at rendering urban cityscapes such as New York. In the Gallery's *House with Dutch Roof* and *Buildings with Snowbank, Cliffside, New Jersey* he turned his expert eye to the suburban architecture of New Jersey. The works were executed just before the Great Depression, when Marin took a renewed interest in experimenting with oils. [2] In both instances Marin applied the techniques of watercolor, the medium that

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he had become closely associated with and one that many viewed as inherently more modernist than traditional oil painting, to his painting practice. The most distinctive features of the two works—their small scale and the rapid, lively application of pigment—were clearly informed by Marin’s mastery of watercolor.

The subject of this unsigned and undated oil sketch is almost certainly the house with a Dutch roof and three windows that appears over the garage of Marin’s residence in *Buildings with Snowbank, Cliffside, New Jersey*. The composition was probably executed at the same time, although it is not as geometrically well defined. Marin’s interpretation of the subject in *House with Dutch Roof* is considerably more spontaneous and expressive, especially in his treatment of the rutted snow along the roof in the foreground and the background details. This view was taken from an elevated vantage point, possibly one of the windows in the artist’s second-story studio in his house.

The truncated forms and partial vistas found in Marin’s works of the late 1920s drew upon the lessons of cubism he had learned from the displays of works by Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973) at Alfred Stieglitz’s 291 gallery from 1911 to 1917. During the early 1930s Stieglitz, working in a similar vein, embarked on a series of photographs looking out from the windows of his new gallery, An American Place, and from his modern high-rise apartment building in New York, The Shelton.

Ruth Fine, in her discussion of two additional oil paintings of Cliffside from 1929—*From My Window, Cliffside, New Jersey* [fig. 2] and *Winter from My Back Window, Cliffside, New Jersey*—noted: “dating from long after Marin had begun investigating abstraction, [they] exemplify the fact that virtually every year he made paintings of close fidelity to their sources in nature as well as paintings in which formal or ideational notions prevail.” [3]

Robert Torchia

August 17, 2018

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## COMPARATIVE FIGURES



**fig. 1** Dorothy Norman, *John Marin House, Cliffside, N.J.*, 1930s, gelatin silver print, Collection Center for Creative Photography. © 1998 Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Foundation



**fig. 2** John Marin, *From My Window, Cliffside, New Jersey*, 1929, oil on canvas, Detroit Institute of Arts, Bequest of Robert H. Tannahill. © Detroit Institute of Arts / Bridgeman Images

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## NOTES

- [1] “Noted Artist Abhors All ‘isms’ Except Real ‘ism’ in Art,” *Palisadian*, Dec. 11, 1947, quoted in Ruth Fine, *John Marin* (Washington, DC, 1990), 110.
- [2] Sheldon Reich, *John Marin*, 2 vols. (Tucson, AZ, 1970), 1:192.
- [3] Ruth Fine, *John Marin* (Washington, DC, 1990), 111.
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## TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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The plain-weave fabric support was glued to a stiff board, probably by the artist. Extra fabric was folded around and adhered to the back of the board. The tacking margins are intact, and a selvage is present on the bottom edge. The artist applied paint swiftly and spontaneously over a commercially prepared, thin, cream colored ground that remains visible in many spots throughout the composition. There are small areas of impasto and brushmarking. The paint surface has a lean, chalky appearance that indicates the pigments are underbound. The painting is in good condition, other than the even coating of grime that has accumulated over the unvarnished surface.

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### PROVENANCE

The artist [1870-1953]; his estate; by inheritance to his son, John C. Marin, Jr. [1914-1988], Cape Split, Maine; gift 1986 to NGA.

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1970 Reich, Sheldon. *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*. Tucson, 1970: no. 28.23.
- 1992 *American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 231, repro.
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