



John Marin
American, 1870 - 1953

Winter Landscape

c. 1900

oil on canvas

overall: 22.8 x 29.8 cm (9 x 11 3/4 in.)

Inscription: across top stretcher bar reverse: (Landscape) c. 1900-1905 SR#1[the "1" crossed out] 00.1 NBM 2/21/84 / 9 x 11 3/4

Gift of John Marin, Jr. 1986.54.1

ENTRY

This winter landscape is particularly noteworthy because it is one of the very few paintings that John Marin is known to have executed prior to his departure for Paris in 1905. It was painted during the time he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia with Thomas Anshutz (American, 1851 - 1912) and Hugh Henry Breckenridge (American, 1870–1937). Marin claimed that he learned “not a damn thing” at the Academy, “but if you say what did you get in tutelage from the great instructor nature well I got anything I got quite a lot yes quite a lot.” [1] Evidently the peripatetic Marin preferred wandering and sketching to attending formal classes. In 1900 he was awarded a prize at the Pennsylvania Academy for outdoor sketches of wild fowl and riverboats that he had made in Weehawken, New Jersey.

The emphasis on tone and mood and the intimate scale of this subdued winter scene is indebted to the aestheticism of James McNeill Whistler (American, 1834 - 1903), who exerted a strong influence during Marin’s formative years. [2] Marin’s success in communicating a sense of the transitory effects of light and atmosphere in the scene further reflects the impact of French impressionism as well as the

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work of Pennsylvania impressionists such as Edward Willis Redfield (American, 1869 - 1965). At times using the blunt end of his brush to inscribe the branches, Marin produced a richly textured, painterly surface. Although the buildings are mostly obscured by the snowy haze, it is noteworthy that Marin, who had just abandoned his career as an architect, chose an architectural subject. The composition, with its prominent foreground and subject of buildings viewed through a row of trees placed in the middle ground, is similar to *Third Street, New Castle, Delaware*, which the artist painted about 31 years later.

Robert Torchia

July 24, 2024

NOTES

- [1] Marin to E. M. Benson, August 17, 1935, quoted in Ruth Fine, *John Marin* (Washington, DC, 1990), 27.
- [2] For a discussion of Marin's early work, see Sheldon Reich, *John Marin* (Tucson, Arizona, 1970), 1:2–8.
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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The unlined, fine, plain-weave fabric support remains mounted on its original stretcher. The tacking margins are unevenly cut, and the margin along the top edge tapers away at the left corner. The corners are torn, and the attachment of the fabric to the stretcher is insecure. The artist applied a dark-gray toning layer over the commercially prepared white ground. Examination of the ground with the stereomicroscope shows fine wrinkling of the surface throughout, indicating a drying defect in the upper dark-gray layer. The numerous pieces of grit and wood embedded in the paint surface indicate that this painting was executed outdoors. The paint was applied wet into wet with opaque pigment; low impasto is present throughout. Marin used a stick to scrape through the wet paint when forming some of the branches. The unvarnished surface was obscured by a thick layer of grime that was removed in a 2002 treatment.

Michael Swicklik

Winter Landscape

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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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1970 Reich, Sheldon. *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*. Tucson, 1970: no. 00.1 (as *Landscape*).
- 1992 *American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 230, repro.
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