

Basic Detail Report



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Title: Circles

Date: c. 1928

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3efed

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: Thayer's "Circles" made a powerful impact on audiences in 1929. The sheer size of the canvas commands attention and forces viewers to become engulfed in the scene. "Circles" is the painting that established Thayer as a major talent in America and won her a prestigious Hallgarten Prize at the National Academy of Design in 1929.(5) Art reporters in her native Boston, then a bastion of refined and elegant realism, took notice, one writing approvingly, "Miss Thayer paints legitimately, she is not one of the extremists of the day-and indulges in no modernisms."(6) "Circles" depicts a nude woman seated on a chair with a tiger skin rug on the floor beneath her feet. She is alone and her back faces us. Thayer's nude female subject follows a tradition in Western art that dates to the Renaissance, and her style is naturalistic but highly advanced. The shading used to convey the three-dimensional figure was created through a combination of shades of violet, green, lilac, blue, and ocher. The intricately layered shadows pick up the same hues present in the background, the rug, and the silken robe beneath the figure. The complex layering of colors and brushstrokes that Thayer employed to create light and darkness, depths and shadows all work together to create a beautiful and complex picture. Thayer created a sense of eroticism by juxtaposing textures and designs. Her ability to accurately depict these textures makes them seem almost tangible; the robe appears to shine with reflected light, the hairs of the tiger rug bristle individually where the figure's ankles and toes sink into the fur, and the nude's skin is flawlessly rendered with a natural smoothness. The title probably comes from the multiple overlapping circles of purple and lilac that form the background. Their roundness is echoed in the roundness of the figure's body, legs, breasts, and buttocks, the shape of the tiger's head, and the sweeping position of her robe, all guiding the viewer's eye from one rounded form to another. Thayer had been an international traveler since childhood and the tiger rug and background design may be exotic elements inspired by her travels to Africa or Asia. The circle design also evokes Art Deco styles that would have been completely modern in the 1920s.(7) Although the female nude lacks any individuality since we are unable to see her face, she engages viewers nonetheless and allows them an intimate and erotic

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glimpse into this moment. K.B.H. NOTES: 5. The award was given annually to American artists under the age of thirty-five; see Hirshler, "Studio of Her Own", p. 198. 6. Ibid., p. 152. 7. Ibid., pp. 138, 152, 198; and Temin, "Portrait."
Dimensions: 72 x 48 in. (182.9 x 121.9 cm)