

# Basic Detail Report



## **Title: Washington Square**

Date: 1910

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@2850a

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: Washington Square, a New York landmark, was a favorite subject for a number of New York artists. Glackens, who lived and worked on Washington Square South from 1904 to 1913, frequently sketched and painted the view from his studio. He painted more views of Washington Square than any other subject, except for the beach near Bellport, Long Island. While the Bellport scenes depict the glistening blue water and bright sunshine of a seaside summer resort, the Washington Square views of the wintertime city reflect Glackens's interest in varying weather conditions. The New Britain painting, a view of the park on a winter day, typifies the artist's delight in using paint to describe specific conditions: thick mud, deep snow drifts, or the glistening surfaces of wet sidewalks. Dark brown paint, applied in thick

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brushstrokes, suggests the texture of a muddy street. A number of contemporary commentators, noting Glackens's interest in light and weather, compared his works to those of French Impressionists. Yet Glackens's views of the square also reveal an interest in people. Unlike the American Impressionist Childe Hassam, for example, who often featured elegant carriages and fashionably dressed strollers entering the park from Fifth Avenue, Glackens depicted park goers of differing classes and ethnic backgrounds. Once the strict domain of wealthy New Yorkers, Washington Square had by the turn of the century had become a borderland separating the residences of the conservative Brahmins to the north from the factory buildings and working-class immigrant community of Greenwich Village to the south. Reflecting this change, Glackens's Washington Square scenes are inhabited by street sweepers, nannies, shop and factory girls, and young immigrant mothers wearing brightly colored shawls, as well as more elegantly dressed strollers. Not surprisingly, over the six or so years that he painted the life in Washington Square, Glackens repeated a number of compositional elements and figural motifs. As in "Washington Square, Winter", he often centered his scene on a large tree, which served not only as a focal point for the composition and a means of leading the eye diagonally back into the picture but also as a gathering place for bus riders and pedestrians. Often a bright green bus or trolley appears in the pictures; seen in the background of the New Britain view, it takes center stage in "Descending from the Bus" (ca. 1910; IBM Corporation, Armonk, N.Y.) and "The Green Car" (1910; Metropolitan Museum of Art). The boy with a red sled, standing alone in the New Britain picture, appears in the same pose, this time with a companion, in "Boys with Sled, Washington Square" (ca. 1910; private collection). The woman in the black coat, feathered hat, and muff is also seen in a number of views, including "The Green Car". MAS Bibliography: Guy Pène du Bois, "William Glackens", American Artists Series (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1931); Ira Glackens, "William Glackens and the Eight: The Artists Who Freed American Art" (New York: Horizon Press, 1957; rev. ed., New York, 1983); Vincent J. DeGregorio, "The Life and Art of William J. Glackens," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1955; Richard J. Wattenmaker, "The Art of William Glackens," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1972; William H. Gerdts and Jorge H. Santis, "William Glackens" (Fort Lauderdale: Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, 1996). Dimensions: 25 x 30 in. (63.5 x 76.2 cm) Frame Dimension: 32 1/4 x 37 x 2 1/2 in. (81.9 x 94 x 6.4 cm)