

Basic Detail Report



Title: Elevated, Columbus Avenue, New York

Date: 1916

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@27edd

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: In the teens Beal produced a number of views of New York that emphasized its industrial and technological growth. Elevated trains, skyscrapers, docks, bridges, and factories are often depicted from a high vantage point that allows for a bird's-eye view of the city. The elevated subways, begun in 1868, were New York's first mass-transit service--and the envy of a number of growing cities across the country. Initially viewed as an unwelcome intrusion into the city's social and architectural fabric, the trains soon came to be seen as a pleasant way to see the town as well as an efficient mode of transportation. (1) The New Britain picture is a street-level view of the Ninth Avenue El, one of four above-ground trains serving Manhattan and the outer boroughs. The painting likely depicts one of the stations near Beal's apartment just west of Central park on Sixty-Seventh Street. The composition is dominated by the large masses of the elevated tracks, their steel support girders, and the long diagonal stairway that define the edges of the painting, cut off the sky, and limit our view to the dark space beneath the station. The

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geometric shapes made by the steel grid work are accented by the more colorful patterns of the brownstones within our view, which displays a cacophony of commercial signs and advertisements in their otherwise regular array of window and doorways. On the street, endless parades of anonymous conduct business in the stores or hurry to other destinations. A patterned web of lines and color, "Elevated, Columbus Avenue, New York", reflects Beal's positive outlook on technology and industrial progress while evoking the contrast between the old and the new, the natural and the man-made, that typifies urban life. Ralph W. Carey, "Some Paintings by Gifford Beal", *International Studio* 44 (August 1911): 29-31; Helen Comstock "Gifford Beal's Versatility", *International Studio* 77 (June 1923): 236-42; "Gifford Beal: Paintings and Watercolors", exhib.cat. (Washington, D.D.: Phillips Collection; and Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Art Museum, 1971); "Reynolds Beal A>N>A> (1866-1951), "Impressions of an American Artist: Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings--Selections from the Haig Tashjian Collection", exhib.cat. (New York: Sterling Regal, 1984); Ronald G. Pisano and Ann C. Madonia, "Gifford Beal: Picture-Maker, exhib. cat. (New York:Kraushaar Galleries, 1993). Notes (1) On the history of the elevated train, see Stan Fischler, "Uptown Downtown: A Trip through Time on New York's Subways : (New York: Hawthorn Dutton, 1976), pp. 258-59; and Robert C. Reed, "The New York Elevated" (South Brunswick, N.J.: A.S. Barnes, 1978). Dimensions: 36 1/2 x 48 1/2 in. (45 7/8 x 57 1/2 x 3 in. framed)