

# Basic Detail Report



**Title: The Samovar**

Date: c. 1920

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3e03d

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: An excellent example of Carlsson's later Tonalist still lifes, the New Britain painting depicts a simple arrangement of a brass bowl, a samovar, and a

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white earthenware vase-objects that please the eye with their simple but classic shapes. Round and oblong forms play against one another, the vase echoing the form of the samovar, the samovar mimicking the roundness of the kettle. As in the best of Carlsen's works, the tonal values are very close. The luminous brass vessels are the focus--their glowing surface reflections are complemented by the matte white earthenware pot in the foreground; their darker silvery gray tones are repeated in the rich monochromatic background. Carlsen's painting is detailed, though not laboriously so. Instead the edges and reflections are slightly blurred, so that the painting is bathed in a soft luminosity and tranquility. Carlsen's predominant philosophy was one of classic balance and simplicity: "Still life painting must be of a well understood simplicity, solid, strong, vital, unnecessary details neglected, salient points embellished, made the most of, every touch full of meaning and for the love of beauty."(1) The objects themselves may be totally lacking in traditional beauty, but the painting is made beautiful by Carlsen's sensitivity to their arrangement. As the artist told his students: "The arrangement well spaced, the objects good in color and form, the background simple and neutral, the key chosen, and half of the work is done."(2) MAS Bibliography: Emil Carlsen, "On Still-Life Painting," "Palette and Bench" 1 (October 1908): 6-8; Arthur Edwin Bye, "Pots and Pans; or, Studies in Still-Life Painting" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921); Wortsman-Row Galleries, "The Art of Emil Carlsen, 1853-1932" (San Francisco: Wortsman-Rowe Galleries, 1975); Gertrude Sill, "Emil Carlsen: Lyrical Impressionist," "Art & Antiques" 3 (March/April 1980): 88-95; William H. Gerds, "Painters of the Humble Truth: Masterpieces of American Still Life, 1801-1939", exhib. Cat. (Columbia, Mo., and London: University of Missouri Press, 1981), pp. 228-30. Notes: 1. Carlsen, "On Still-Life Painting," p. 7. 2. Ibid., p. 6. Dimensions: 29 1/8 x 27 1/8 in. (74 x 68.9 cm)