

# Basic Detail Report



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## **Title: Old Lady Sewing**

Date: c. 1879

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3e23c

Medium: Oil on wood panel

Description: "Sewing" depicts an elderly woman seated in three-quarter profile in a dark shallow space. Light hits her head, upper body, and hands as she stitches a piece of white fabric, conveying what one contemporary writer called an "atmosphere of quiet concentration and simplicity." (1) This mood is characteristic of the interior scenes Eakins produced during the 1870s, many of which, such as "Home Scene" (ca. 1870-71; Brooklyn Museum of Art), feature female relatives or close family friends. These pictures represent a contemplative feminine counterpart to Eakins's active masculine rowing and hunting pictures of the same period. In his catalogue of Eakins's works, Lloyd Goodrich lists the New Britain panel as a sketch for a watercolor, now lost, entitled "A Quiet Moment". He identifies the sitter in both as a Mrs. King, who also posed for the figure of the seated chaperone in the foreground of "William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River" and for the figures in "Knitting and Spinning", reliefs Eakins designed for the James P. Scott residence in the early 1880s.(2) The New Britain panel also closely resembles the watercolor "Seventy Years Ago" (1877; Art Museum, Princeton University). (3) In several of these compositions, Eakins dressed his models in historical costumes, perhaps intending, as the latter title indicates and as in the "William Rush", to evoke an earlier time in American history, probably in response to the upsurge of nostalgic interest in the colonial period spurred by the Centennial Exhibition of 1876.(4) EM Bibliography: Lloyd Goodrich, "Thomas Eakins: His Life and Work" (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1933); Lloyd Goodrich, "Thomas Eakins", 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1982); Elizabeth Johns, "Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life" (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983); John Wilmerding, ed., "Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) and the Heart of American Life", exhib. cat. (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1993); Susan Danly, Cheryl Leibold, et al., "Eakins and the Photograph: Works by Thomas Eakins and His Circle in the Collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts" (Washington, D.C., and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Kathleen A. Foster, et al., "Thomas Eakins Rediscovered": "Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts" (New Haven: Yale University Press; Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1997). Notes: 1 . Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, "Water-Color Exhibition at Philadelphia" in The American Architect and

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Building News 11 (April 22, 1882): 184. 2. Goodrich, Thomas Eakins, 1933, cat. nos. 131, 132, 106, 109, pp. 170-72. 3. Ibid., cat no. 114, p. 171. 4. Homer, Thomas Eakins, 1992, pp. 98-99.

Dimensions: 14 1/2 x 10 3/8 in. (36.8 x 26.4 cm) Other: 22.4 x 18.4 x 2.5 cm (8 13/16 x 7 1/4 x 1 in.)