

# Basic Detail Report



## **Title: Winter Landscape**

Date: 1886

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3e046

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: Samuel Carr's preference for images of children or children and their families falls squarely within the post-Civil War genre tradition in the United States. Unlike some of his contemporaries--J.G. Brown, Eastman Johnson, and Seymour Guy, for example--Carr almost always placed his children outdoors. But the activities he pictured are typical of those in genre scenes: families visiting the beach, sleigh and buggy rides, coming from school, playing with animals. Carr tended to be more naturalistic and less anecdotal than his genre brethren. He observed and presented the lives of middle-class children without providing a clear narrative or an elaborate moral statement. Some scholars have wondered if his careful observation and occasional hyper-realism indicate that he was a photographer, but no evidence has appeared to support this theory. In *Winter Landscape*, a large group of children are skating on a country pond. Houses and barns are in the background to the left, with a village in the distance. Bare trees flank the scene, and an expanse of thin snow and dead grass defines the edge of the pond in the foreground. At least nineteen children are on the pond, and others are headed their way. Three children and sturdy diagonals shape the group. A boy to the left skates away from us, leaning to the left; a girl in the middle foreground centers the entire canvas with her position and splash of red skirt (the only strong color in the painting); a boy in a cap skates

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off at a vigorous slant to the right. Their diagonals, and the standing, sitting, falling children beyond, create the motion typical of skating and set this painting apart from more static representations of the subject. Carr painted a number of images of children at play in the winter. *Skating* (n.d.; private collection) features a closeup of a skating group, with a boy dressed and posed in the same manner as the boy in *Winter Landscape* gliding off to the right. He executed at least five other scenes of winter, which nicely complement his paintings of children at the beach: a summertime opportunity for a similar white expanse on which he can position his figures. The cloudy winter sky in *Winter Landscape* is as captivating as the children. Carr masterfully reproduced the zones of clouds—low and misty, dense and gray, broken and high—that define a winter afternoon. The sky and the snow fields are painted in variations of the same gray, white, and blue, so that the children and trees seem almost suspended in an all-encompassing winter atmosphere. With this attention to the quality of the day, *Winter Landscape* is as much about a mood as it is a scene from daily life. In this respect Carr's work is similar to that of the Barbizon painters and their American admirers. In particular, Carr's preference for outdoor scenes and for quiet observations with limited narrative, as well as his later turn toward pastorals with farm animals, suggest that he followed the growing popularity of the Barbizon painters in late-nineteenth-century America. While Carr's works lack their spontaneity, he did seek to capture a quality of contentment that we associate with the Barbizon style, manifested in landscape as a realm of emotional calm. Certainly his later attempts at paintings of sheep and cows, sometimes accompanied by children, appealed directly to the growing desire for "parlor-room pastorals," a more decorative version of the Barbizon school paintings that swept the American art public in the 1880s and 1890s. LW Bibliography: Hermann Warner Williams, *Mirror to the American Past: A Survey of American Genre Painting 1750-1900* (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1973), pp. 196-98; Deborah Chotner, *S. S. Carr (American, 1837-1908)*, exhib. cat. (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College Museum of Art, 1976); *An American Perspective: Nineteenth-Century Art from the Collection of Jo Ann and Julian Ganz Jr*, exhib. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1981), p. 120; Margaret C. Conrads, *American Paintings and Sculpture at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990), pp. 24-26. Notes: 1. Chotner, *S. S. Carr*, p. 7. 2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*, p. 6; Conrads, *American Paintings and Sculpture*, p. 24. 4. In addition to the New Britain painting, there are three other located paintings of children in winter painted by Carr: *Skating*, n.d., private collection (Chotner cat. no. 18; *School's Out*, 1882, private collection (Chotner cat. no. 17); and *Through the Snow*, n.d. (Chotner cat. no. 20). According to historical records, Carr painted three or four other winter scenes, all now missing: *Winter Sports*, ca. 1896 (Chotner, Appendix A, p. 37); *Winter Evening*, ca. 1898 (Chotner, Appendix A, p. 37); and *Through the Snow* (Chotner cat. no. 20 or one of two paintings by that title shown at the Brooklyn Art Club in 1886 and 1889). 5. Chotner, *S. S. Carr*, p. 6. 6. Peter Bermingham, *American Art in the*

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Barbizon Mood (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Art, 1975), p. 17. 7.  
Ibid., p. 78.  
Dimensions: 22 x 36 in. (55.9 x 91.4 cm)