

Basic Detail Report



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Title: The Emigrant Model

Date: 1882

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3de6e

Medium: Oil on wood panel

Description: On separate trips to Europe in 1881 and 1882, Blum joined several of his painter friends and colleagues in decorating the steamers "Belgenland" and "Pennland". These vessels were operated by the Red Star Line, whose ships were recommended by a leading guidebook as "being especially good for artists wishing to make the trip to Paris to see the exhibitions and then head on their way to other locales." This was true, according to the author, because they landed in Antwerp, "only a few hours railway ride from Paris." (1) In general design the vessels included family rooms, dining rooms, and a saloon deck with elaborate woodwork and paintings. An illustrated article chronicling the 1882 voyage aboard the "Pennland" appeared in "Century Magazine" in January 1884. (2) On board, in addition to Blum, were A. A. Anderson, James Carroll Beckwith, William Merritt Chase, Herbert Denman, George H. W. Edwards, Fernand Lungren, Arthur Quartley, Frederic P. Vinton, and an artist by the name of Lawrence. The group joined in decorating the cabin of the ship's commander, Captain Weyer. The panels painted by the voyaging artists were removed from the ship for an exhibition in November 1882 at the Art

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Students League in New York. A critic for the "Art Journal" described the works on view: A portrait of Captain Weyer . . . by Frederic P. Vinton, has the place of honor. On one side is a squally day at sea, by G. W. Edwards, on the other a woman's head, by J. C. Beckwith, which he calls the comet. Robert Blum filled one panel with a sturdy Dutch peasant, and F. H. Lungren another with a pink-robed maiden coming down a green hill. By William M. Chase is a young woman in black on the beach, and an upright marine, with a strip of landscape and a figure. Arthur Quartley signs another marine, a moonlight, with a vessel. Mr. Beckwith appears again in a snow scene with figures, and a young gentleman having what he calls a good time; also, with Mr. Chase he has decorated the clock and barometer. Robert Blum was equally industrious, since he ornamented the ceiling with flowers and insects, and added an Italian panel. Mr. A. A. Anderson contributed also some flower and landscape panels. (3) "The Emigrant Model", the only ship panel by Blum that has been located, is the painting referred to by the "Art Journal" as depicting a "sturdy Dutch peasant." The picture is inscribed "To Capt. Weyer," with whom, during the early 1880s, Blum became a close friend, spending time with him when living abroad and arranging, whenever possible, to sail with him to Europe or on his return voyage to America. Blum's painting anticipates his study of the art of Diego Velázquez in Madrid during the summer of 1882. "The Emigrant Model" may have been executed at the suggestion of Chase, who reportedly "loved to pick out for his friends Velázquez types." (4) Using a limited palette of dark browns and grays, Blum broadly rendered the man's ruddy facial features, beard, and ruffled clothing. The floor is light or silvery gray, and the wall is a vibrant white with accents of bluish gray. The light-brown clogs of the peasant provide a transitional link between Blum's highly realistic characterization of figure and his more decorative treatment of setting. BW Bibliography: Robert Blum, "An Artist in Japan," "Scribner's Magazine" 13 (April-June 1893): 399-414, 624-36, 729-49; Charles H. Caffin, "Robert Frederick Blum," "International Studio" 21 (December 1903): clxxvii-cxcii; Martin Birnbaum, "Catalogue of a Memorial Loan Exhibition of the Works of Robert Frederick Blum", exhib. cat. (New York: Berlin Photographic Company, 1913); Richard Boyle, "A Retrospective Exhibition: Robert Frederick Blum (1857-1903)", exhib. cat. (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1966); Bruce Weber, "Robert Frederick Blum (1857-1903) and His Milieu," Ph.D. diss., Graduate School of the City University of New York, 1985. NOTES: 1. "King's Handbook of New York", 2 vols. (Boston: Moses King, 1893; reprint, n.p.: Benjamin Blom, 1972), vol .1, p. 88. 2. C. C. Buel, "Log of an Ocean Studio," "Century Magazine" 27 (January 1884): 356-71. 3. "Art Notes," "Art Journal" 44 (1882): 351. 4. Stanley T. Williams, "The Spanish Background of American Literature", 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955; reprint, n.p.: Archon Books, 1968), vol. 1, p. 273. Dimensions: 21 1/2 x 11 1/2 in. (54.6 x 29.2 cm)