



The Snow-Shoe Dance, plate 14 from the "North American Indian Portfolio"

Date

1845

Primary Maker

George Catlin

Medium

Color lithograph on paper

Description

In the northern latitudes of America, where the winters are long and very severe, from the heavy falls of snow which accumulate for three or four months of the year, the Indians have very ingeniously constructed a large but light frame, with a fine webbing made of small thongs of raw hide, which is worn under the foot, buoying them up, and enabling them to run upon the surface of the snow without sinking into it. This ingenious contrivance enables them to move about in the dead of winter, gaining food for their families, which would otherwise be exceedingly difficult for them to do. These dresses for the feet they call Snow Shoes; and as they enable them to overtake the heavy animals and slay them with great ease, their hunting facilities are materially increased by an accumulation of snow; and at its first appearance they must needs celebrate the joyous event by a dance, accompanied with a song of thanks to the Great Spirit, "who has sent it for their benefit and amusement." This picturesque scene is called by them the "Snow-Shoe Dance," as it is danced with the snow-shoes on their feet, around an ornamented pair of the same, which are elevated, with the appropriate flags and spears of the band.

Dimensions

Composition: 13 1/2 x 18 1/2 in. (34.3 x 47 cm) Sheet: 15 9/16 x 22 1/8 in. (39.5 x 56.2 cm)