



Artist's Hand Holding Children's Drawings

Date

February - March 1940

Primary Maker

Edwin W. Dickinson

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

Edwin W. Dickinson was born in Seneca Falls, New York, and attended the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn from 1910 to 1911, followed by the Art Students League, where he studied with the painter William Merritt Chase. From 1913 until about 1939–40, he lived in Provincetown, Massachusetts; thereafter, he continued to spend his summers on Cape Cod, in Wellfleet, but lived elsewhere during the rest of the year, primarily in New York City. He taught at a number of institutions throughout his life, including the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York, the Art Institute of Buffalo, Cornell University, and Boston University. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Dickinson executed a number of

monumental, dark-toned canvases showing figures and objects within incongruous physical spaces, which have been cast as representations of memories, emotions, or dreams and as visual evocations of music. In the late 1940s, his work began to gain in popularity, and he was featured in the Museum of Modern Art's groundbreaking Fifteen Americans exhibition of 1952. His images were neither abstract nor explicitly Surrealist, however, and fell out of favor with the advent of Abstract Expressionism. According to his datebook, Dickinson began this work in Wellfleet on February 17, 1940, for an exhibition at the Georgette Passedoit Gallery in New York. In the painting, the artist's left hand can be seen holding a drawing by his granddaughter. A second drawing, this one by his grandson, is visible in the background. The inclusion of a picture or a window within a painted representation was a device that Dickinson used more than once during this period. The present work can be understood as reflecting on the nature of art itself: what compels us to create, and how do we represent in two dimensions the world around us? Daniel W. Dietrich II, Class of 1964, was a passionate supporter of the Emerson Gallery and of the arts in general at Hamilton College and donated funds that were used in the construction of the Wellin Museum. Upon his death in 2015, he bequeathed four paintings, including this one, and eighteen drawings by Dickinson to the College. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions

Overall: 23 × 20 in. (58.4 × 50.8 cm) Frame: 30 1/4 × 27 × 1 7/8 in. (76.8 × 68.6 × 4.8 cm)