



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

FREDERICK CARL FRIESEKE (1874-1939)

Summer Afternoon

Oil on canvas

26 x 32 inches

Signed lower left

Provenance

Esther Rosenbaum, New York, 1951-2005

It is sunshine, flowers in sunshine, girls in sunshine, the nude in sunshine, which I have been principally interested in for eight years....¹

One should never forget that seeing and producing an effect of nature is not a matter of intellect, but of feeling.²

Frederick Carl Frieseke was perhaps the most internationally celebrated Impressionist of his time.

He was born in Owosso, Michigan in 1874 and went to Chicago to study at the Art Institute of Chicago and then to New York for lessons at the Art Students League. It was not before long that he followed the expatriate trail to France and enrolled at the Académie Julian under Jean-Paul Laurens and Benjamin Constant. In Paris, he met Whistler, whose color harmonies the young artist quickly absorbed.

Frieseke's career was graced with countless honors. He won a Gold medal at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1913, a Gold medal in Munich in 1904, a Silver medal at the Corcoran Gallery in 1935, the Grand Prize at the Pan-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, two Gold medals at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1920, and a Gold medal at the Philadelphia Art Club in 1922. Frieseke won notice in Italy as his work, *Autumn* was acquired by the Museo de Arte Moderna in Venice, and a

¹ Frederick Frieseke cited in Clara T. MacChesney, "Frieseke Tells Some of the Secrets of his Art" New York Times, June 7, 1914, cited in Gerdts, William H., *American Impressionism*, New York: Artabras, 1984) 264.

² Freiseke cited in MacChesney, cited in Gerdts, 265.



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gallery was designated for his work at the 1909 Venice Biennale. He was also represented in Rome's 1911 International Exposition, and the artist was documented by Italian journalists.³ In France, Frieseke was made a member of the Legion of Honor.

Now works by Frieseke reside in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, National Gallery of Art, Musee D'Orsay, High Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Chrysler Museum of Art, Butler Institute of American Art, Birmingham Museum of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, New Britain Museum of Art, National Academy of Design, North Carolina Museum of Art and the Birmingham Museum of Art among other notable institutions.

When summarizing Frieseke's great contribution to the Impressionist movement, William H. Gerdts commented, "the academic classicist interpretation gave way to the new generation of Impressionists. Perhaps the first artist of this group in Giverny was Frederick Frieseke, who also became the dominant American there and the most representative of the aesthetic that developed."⁴

A major composition, *Summer Afternoon* is a breathtaking example of the female subjects that Giverny's bright and delicate climate inspired. Full of dappled light, lavender, pink tints and a gentle rhythmic patterning of abundant leaves with their tender water reflections, the painting denotes the artist's concern for color harmony and patterns, two aesthetic devices emphasized by his mentor, James McNeill Whistler. The opalescent flesh tones of the figure suggest the influence of Pierre-Auguste Renoir, whose robust hand Frieseke proudly admitted to emulate. An ideal depiction of female beauty, *Summer Afternoon* carries a soulful dreaminess in details such as the yellow bonnet and silky garments gracefully thrown upon the canoe and in grander features, the luminous layering of transparent walls of soft leaves and ether.

J.C.K.

³ Gerdts, 265.

⁴ Gerdts, 262.