

JOHN MARTINI, JR. (J. D. MARTINI) (Fl. 1890's)

Pair of Hudson Highland Views, 1894

Oil on board

8 x 10 inches (each)

Signed and dated 1894, lower right

This pair of Hudson River scenes by the understudied artist John Martini, Jr. (J. D. Martini) is representative of the painter's style and subject matter. Though he lived in Buffalo in the early twentieth century¹, Martini favored the landscape of the Hudson Highlands as the subject for several works painted throughout the 1890s.

Martini's subject, the Hudson Highlands, is important in both American art and American history. A range of mountains situated on both sides of the Hudson River in New York, it was a strategic stronghold for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, preventing the British from cutting off New England from the rest of the colonies. Decades later, the river inspired many of Thomas Cole's (1801-48) earliest paintings, which would be the first created in what is now called the Hudson River School. The region had not lost its popularity with American artists by the end of the nineteenth century as many artists depicted the area in its contemporary context as a major water route for trade and tourism. Martini's naturalistic paintings feature sailboats afloat on a serene river with prominent cliffs in the background. Despite the common presence of large steam-powered vessels that frequently carried both tourists and cargo up and down the river, Martini chose to instead focus on the peacefulness of the River and its landscape. The inclusion of sailboats gives a sense of timelessness to the scene, and the sense of tranquility is heightened through the placid stillness of the reflective water.

¹ Buffalo, New York, City Directory, 1902, p. 792.



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J. D. Martini, *Pair of Sea Landscapes*, 1894, private collection.²

A pair of similar scenes, painted in the same year, are nearly identical in viewpoint and perspective, though the lush green landscape of this pair has given way to colorful autumnal foliage in the later works. This interest in the effect of the changing seasons in light and climatic conditions on the landscape is common to painters of the Hudson River School. Surviving records of Martini's works indicate that the artist often produced works in pairs, meant to be sold (and displayed) as a set. Indeed, past auction records point to the existence of at least two other pairs of Hudson River oils, one set from 1892³, and another in 1895⁴.

This production of thematically related pairs or series was not without precedent and was fairly common among artists in the Hudson River School, such as Thomas Cole, and the earlier paintings of Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorraine, whose works were influential to Hudson River painters.⁵ While pairs and series were likely commercially viable for artists, as the 2005 exhibition at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, *American Scenery: Different View in Hudson River School Painting* elucidated, they also allowed for the exploration and expression of different moods and philosophical concepts through nuanced depictions of weather, light, and season.⁶

² Sold in Fine December Estate Sale by Antiques at Pompey Hollow, LLC on Dec. 9, 2011.

³ Classifieds. "Auction: Complete Antique Stock of Peter Duff Shop." *Hartford Courant*, August 15, 1965, p. 59.

⁴ Classifieds. "Genora's Antique Auction." *Hartford Courant*, April 13, 1980, p. 78.

⁵ Traditional Fine Arts Organization. "American Scenery: Different Views in Hudson River School Painting: August 7-December 31, 2005." <http://tfaoi.org/aa/6aa/6aa11.htm> (Accessed August 24, 2017).

⁶ Columbia University Press. "Different Views in Hudson River Painting." <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/different-views-in-hudson-river-school-painting/9780231138215> (Accessed August 24, 2017).