



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

CHARLES T. PHELAN (B. 1840)

Landscape in Autumn

Oil on panel

9 x 8 inches

Signed lower right

Little is known about the life of Charles T. Phelan, an American landscape painter active throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. Born in New York in 1840, Phelan is known to have studied under the French-born American painter Frederick Rondel (1826-1892). Rondel, an associate of the National Academy of Design from 1880, was best known for his portrait paintings and landscapes, as well as for his most well-recognized pupil, Winslow Homer.

Similar to his teacher, Phelan focused predominantly on landscapes with figures. His expertly rendered agricultural scenes of sheep and livestock dominate the surviving paintings of his oeuvre. It is unknown whether Phelan lived primarily in New York and ventured out of the city on sketching trips only during the summer—as many of his contemporaries did—or if he belonged to one of the many artist colonies that sprung up in rural New England throughout the nineteenth century. However, it is certain—based on such paintings as this one—that Phelan persistently sought out the most vibrant New England scenery for his compositions.

Landscape in Autumn depicts a languid river, which gently winds through a serene wooded mountain landscape. The russet colored trees along the riverbank in the foreground quickly give way to the vibrant golden yellows and fiery reds that flush the middle ground. Meanwhile, in the distance, the surrounding trees still cling to their fleeting greenery. Though the temporal setting is undeniably early autumn, Phelan gives the viewer a sense of a landscape that is still in active seasonal transition, suggesting the ephemeral quality of nature. The crisp blues of the clouded sky and distant mountains evoke the chill of the new season.

In light of such works as *Landscape in Autumn*, it becomes clear that Phelan had a singular talent for illustrating fall in New England. While impeccably rendering the region's remarkable abundance and incomparable beauty, Phelan advocates for the quiet serenity of the rural landscape that existed a short distance away from New York's increasingly industrialized center.