



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art



### MARTHA WALTER (1875–1976)

*Women and Children in Anticoli, c. 1908-1923*

Oil on canvas

36 × 40 inches

Signed lower right

American Impressionist Martha Walter was well-known for her colorful beach scenes featuring Gloucester, Coney Island, Atlantic City, and the French Coast. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Walter received her education at the local Girls' High School. She attended

the Pennsylvania Museum School and School of Industrial Art known today as the University of the Arts College of Art and Design between 1895 and 1898. Her remarkable talent was recognized through numerous awards and prizes for her work in drawing, pen and ink, and watercolors. Walter continued her studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts under the tutelage of William Merritt Chase. She won the school's Tappan prize in 1902, and a two-year Cresson traveling scholarship in 1908. The scholarship afforded Walter the opportunity to travel to Europe where she visited France, Holland, Italy, and Spain. She studied briefly at the Grande Chaumiere in Paris under Rene Menard and Lucien Simon before deciding to enroll at the Academie Julian. She later established her own studio with several other American women artists on the Rue de Bagneaux.

Walter's *Women and Children in Anticoli* features three washerwomen returning home after a long day of labor. Red-faced and weary, a woman balances a parcel of laundry on her head and a baby on her hip. A blue-eyed toddler beside her gazes out at the viewer. Two women follow balancing a basket and water jug on their heads. To the right of the canvas, a fourth woman with basket raised overhead leads the eye to figures in the distance and the architectural details of the old city.

The large-scale composition was likely based on watercolor sketches Walter executed in the hilltop village of Anticoli Corrado



**Martha Walter 1875-1976** *Carriers – [Anticoli]*, watercolor on paper, 10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> h × 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> w, Private Collection.



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outside of Rome, Italy. In one such sketch entitled *Carriers – Anticoli*, Walter captured women burdened with baskets and large sacks of laundry making their way up the steps of a narrow alleyway. In another sketch entitled *Up the Hill*, Walter captures a procession of figures making



their way up a steep, winding road toward an arched passageway between buildings. While Walter painted the sketches from a distance, she executed the oil painting as a closely cropped composition creating an intimate, almost confrontational effect between the washerwomen and the viewer.

**Martha Walter 1875-1976** *Up the Hill*,  
watercolor on paper, 9 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches,  
Taylor | Graham Gallery.

### Sources:

Paul Sternberg, *Art by American Women*

Additional information supplied by Sara J. MacDonald, Public Services Librarian

The University of the Arts, whose source are the PMSIA commencement programs and annual reports.