



REBECCA C. BUCHANAN (fl. 1870's)

Autumn Landscape

Oil on canvas

17 3/4 x 23 7/8 inches

Signed lower right "R. Buchanan Christy"

Rebecca C. Buchanan was an art teacher and painter who spent the majority of her professional life in the Midwest. By signing her works with her initial, she was able to conceal her gender, which made her work more appealing to potential buyers in the nineteenth century. Though it is possible that "Christy" was her married name, the lack of a marriage license in the historical record indicates that this could have been her middle name.

Buchanan spent her early years in Massachusetts. She graduated from the Framingham Normal School in Massachusetts (now Framingham State University), just west of Boston, in 1875. Shortly after graduating she moved to Kansas, where she joined the faculty of Emporia State University to teach drawing. During her five-year tenure at the University, she also taught geography, penmanship and calisthenics. Buchanan left Kansas in 1880 to teach at Callanan College in Des Moines, Iowa and later returned to her native Massachusetts, maintaining residences in Boston and in Calais, Maine.¹

In this *Autumn Landscape*, the rich browns and use of softened brushwork to delineate atmospheric effects is reminiscent of 17th-century Dutch landscape painting. This Dutch tonal influence reflects the popularity of this style amongst artists working in the Midwest in the late 19th century. Here, a lone figure on horseback rides through a forest clearing toward a distant open landscape dominated by a blue sky filled with billowing clouds. The attention to naturalism and use of loose brushwork also indicates Buchanan's familiarity with the French Barbizon School, particularly Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875). William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), the prominent landscapist and teacher working in her native Massachusetts, was a leading proponent of the Barbizon School and is often credited with popularizing the style in the United States. Indeed, the warm neutral palette, paint handling, and compositional structure of *Autumn Landscape* recall Hunt's tonal landscapes of the 1870s. Hunt's *Landscape* and

¹ Biographical information obtained from Kansas State Teachers College. *A History of the State Normal School of Kansas for the First Twenty-Five Years* (Topeka, Ks.: Kansas Publishing House, 1889).
https://archive.org/stream/historyofstateno00kans/historyofstateno00kans_djvu.txt



HAWTHORNE
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Buchanan's *Autumn Landscape* share a similar open foreground, which draws the viewer in toward a middle ground populated by lush orange foliage that opens up to reveal a blue sky on the distant horizon.



William Morris Hunt. *Landscape*. 1860s-70s. Oil on board. 13 x 20 ¼ inches. Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA.