



HENRY W. BROOKS (b. 1840)

You Naughty Dog

Oil on canvas

16 x 13 inches

Signed lower left

Inscribed with title on stretcher

Though not very much is known of the life and career of Henry W. Brooks, *You Naughty Dog* illustrates the under-appreciated artist's rich talent and sense of humor. Born in England in 1840, Brooks emigrated to California and became a resident of San Francisco, where he worked as a professional sign painter from 1870-76. While working as a commercial artist, he painted landscape and genre scenes on the side in his leisure time. By 1875, he had identified himself on official paperwork as an "artist" rather than "sign painter," as he done in previously.¹ This may indicate that he opened his own studio and became a professional painter. Indeed, in the 1876 San Francisco business registry, Brooks is listed as a landscape and marine painter. Brooks's adeptness for these natural subjects is evident in this captivating genre scene, where two seascapes and a landscape adorn the walls of the interior.

In *You Naughty Dog*, a young girl gently shakes her finger to reprimand her small pug dog, who guiltily cowers against the wall beside the remnants of a doll, which has been torn apart and strewn about the room. The influence of the Dutch and Flemish traditions can be seen in both the subject matter of ordinary life, as well as the adroit use of light and shadow to heighten the dramatic effect of the interior scene. Painted in a naturalistic style, *You Naughty Dog* exemplifies the artist's wide-ranging abilities. From commercial sign painting, to dramatic depictions of nature and humorous genre scenes, Brooks exhibits an admirable versatility in his artistic output.

¹ Compare federal census data from 1870 and San Francisco voter registration data from 1875.