



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

JAMES McDOUGAL HART (1828-1901)

Fall Landscape

Oil on canvas

16 x 12 inches

Signed and dated 1881 lower left

“I aimed at the lazy, listless influence of an Indian summer day.”
-James McDougal Hart¹

It is evident in *Fall Landscape* that James MacDougal Hart strove to capture the very atmosphere he described above, an idle autumn afternoon warmed and enlivened by the sun. His efforts in designing the scene, however, could only be characterized as the sheer opposite of “lazy” and “listless.” The veracity with which he describes every detail of the natural scenery immediately overwhelms the viewer. Harmoniously, the water mirrors the light above and winds through the pristine landscape. On the near side of the river, the artist depicts a lush, bucolic bit of land overarched by the feathery reaches of an old tree, providing shadow to the resting cows. The painting tells a story of a perfect American landscape, of a day to be thoroughly enjoyed.

Hart’s talents in crafting such a flawless scene stem in part from his academic training in Dusseldorf where he studied from 1850 to 1853. Upon his return to America, Hart’s refined style won immediate notice in New York City and Albany, where the artist was reared with his brother William and sister, Julie, both fellow landscape painters. He became a full member of the National Academy of Design in 1860 and took part in major exhibitions throughout both the United States and abroad.

Henry Tuckerman, leading artist biographer of his time wrote of James in 1867: “an exquisite truth and grace [are] characteristic of his pencil.”² In addition to securing success among critics, James was also extremely popular among patrons who avidly acquired his pastoral compositions. In 1879, critic G. W. Sheldon stated that Hart’s landscapes “may be found in almost all the auction-rooms where pictures are sold, and in almost all the principal private collections in the Atlantic cities.”³

¹ Cited in Driscoll, John, *All that is Glorious Around Us: Paintings from the Hudson River School*.

² Tuckerman, Henry T., *Book of the Artists* (New York: James F. Carr, 1967; first published in 1867) 548.

³ Cited in Sullivan, Mark, *James and William Hart: American Landscape Painters* (Philadelphia: John F. Warren, 1983) 6.



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One can now find paintings by James MacDougal Art in the following collections: the Fogg Art Museum: Harvard University Art Museums, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Historical Society, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.