

WALTER LAUNT PALMER (1854-1932)

Slumbering Brook

Mixed media on paper

20 x 24 inches (sight size)

Signed lower left

Walter Launt Palmer was lauded for his snow scenes and paintings of Venice. A student of Frederic Church and Carolus Duran, Palmer won numerous awards and honors including a prize at the National Academy of Design in 1887, a medal at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, a gold medal at the Philadelphia Art Club, and a prize at the Paris Exposition of 1900. He also exhibited at the Brooklyn Art Association, the Boston Art Club, and the Corcoran Gallery Biennials. His work was well-received among critics and is now featured in the collections of the National Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Boston Museum of the Fine Arts, and The Butler Institute of Art among other important institutions.

Palmer spent the majority of his career in Albany, New York, except for a brief interlude at the famous Tenth Street Studio between 1878 and 1880. His trips to Europe, especially to Venice during the 80's and 90's, were formative experiences. It was during the 1890's that Palmer made his forays into the Impressionist technique, straying from the linear, academic style that characterized earlier works.

The artist had a particular talent for seeing rich blues, lavenders, pinks, oranges, and yellows in snow and using the snow-laden ground as a rich repository for the brilliant colors of the reflecting horizon. The famous art historian Samuel Isham, noted this unique character of Palmer's snow scenes where, "All the resources of the open-air school are resorted to in order to get the exact tone of the shadows and keep them keyed up to their natural brilliancy and yet, have a higher, brighter note for the sunlit snow itself."¹ In *Slumbering Brook*, all the qualities that Isham observes come together. Palmer uses subtle colors and shadows to chisel out the snowy undulations of the woodland floor like sculpture. Other elements of the composition hold just as much importance and beauty as the colorful snow. The quiet passage of the forest book divides the rich lavender and green tapestry of evergreens into a lyric archway, making this painting a compositional triumph.

JK

¹ Cited in Mann, Maybelle, Walter Launt Palmer, Poetic Reality, (Exton, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1984) 46.