



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

JAMES CARROLL BECKWITH (1852-1917)

Nita

Oil on panel

10 1/16 x 7 5/8 inches

Signed lower right

Inscribed, “Background of/Nita Sewell/1897,” verso

James Carroll Beckwith enjoyed enormous success as a portrait painter in the genteel tradition of the late nineteenth century. He was born in Hannibal, Missouri in 1852 and subsequently moved to Chicago where he studied painting under Walter Shirlaw in 1868. Three years later the artist relocated to Manhattan and studied at the National Academy of Design under Lemuel Wilmarth. In 1873, Beckwith departed for France and was admitted into the atelier of Carolus Duran, the famous French portraitist. It was in Paris that Beckwith became close friends with John Singer Sargent (a fellow student of Carolus Duran) and collaborated with him and Duran to paint a ceiling mural in the Louvre. Having gained great exposure to French impressionist techniques, Beckwith returned to Chicago in 1878 and shortly thereafter relocated to New York.

Beckwith won a prize at the Paris Salon, a medal at the Paris Expositions of 1889 and 1890, won gold medals at the Atlanta Exposition of 1895 and Charleston Exposition of 1902, and painted a mural at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. The artist also exhibited widely at the National Academy, Brooklyn Art Association, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Boston Art Club, Art Institute of Chicago. His paintings can now be found in the following collections: Wadsworth Athenaeum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, New York Historical Society, Parrish Art Museum, Toledo Museum of Art, Albright-Kemper Gallery of Art, Smith College Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of the Arts, Arnot Art Museum, West Point Museum, Cheeekwood Museum of Art and Indianapolis Art Museum.

Nita is a distinguished example of the intimate vignettes the artist captured of his attractive female models. The composition is brilliantly executed in the placement of the figure close to the picture plane with the fresh rolling countryside situated behind her. Alive and vivid, the subject extends a thoughtful gaze and privies the viewer to her self-assured, yet soft mien. The viewer has a sense of her piercing awareness of the world before her. One immediately sees the influence of his colleague, John Singer Sargent's psychologically probing portraits as well as the brilliant finesse of his brushwork. Beckwith manages to recreate expression not only through the careful modeling of



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Nita's delicate facial features (particularly her jewel-like eyes,) but also in her statuesque pose. The staccato brushstrokes of her dress capture both the richness of its texture as well the dispersal of sunlight upon her. The palette is bold and rich, carrying the picturesque freshness of her airy surroundings.