



## HAWTHORNE

### Fine Art

#### **Joshua Shaw (1776-1860)**

*Seven Hills: An American Landscape*, 1818

Oil on canvas, 17 1/8 x 24 1/4 inches

Signed and dated lower right: J. Shaw / 1818

**Provenance:** Kennedy Galleries, New York; the collection of Leeds and Marion Wheeler, Wellesley, Massachusetts, until 2007

**Exhibited:** Wellesley MA, Davis Museum, Wellesley College, *American Experience: Nineteenth-century Landscapes from the Wheeler Collection*, April 30– June 8, 2008

Brockton, MA, Brockton Art Center, *Landscape and Life in 19<sup>th</sup> century America* (exh. cat. pp 12-13).

English-born Joshua Shaw made significant contributions to the early development of American landscape painting. Not only did he bring the traditions and techniques of British painting with him to America, but his own work also links the tradition of pure topographical painting and the more romantic approach to landscape of the early Hudson River School. Arriving here one year before his countryman Thomas Cole, Shaw was immediately fascinated by the untamed beauty of American scenery, so different from the cultivated landscape of Europe. His enthusiastic feelings for his adopted country are best expressed through his own words:

In no quarter of the globe are the majesty and loveliness of nature more strikingly conspicuous than in America. The vast regions...present to the eye every variety of the beautiful and sublime. Our lofty mountains and almost boundless prairies, our broad and magnificent rivers, the unexampled magnitude of our cataracts, the wild grandeur of our western forests, and the rich and variegated tints of our autumnal landscapes, are unsurpassed by any of the boasted scenery of other countries.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Bellingborough, Lincolnshire, Joshua Shaw was a self-taught artist. He lived in Bath between 1805 and 1812, when he moved to London. During his time in Bath and London he painted mainly landscapes, which he exhibited at the Royal Academy. At the encouragement of Benjamin West, Shaw immigrated to America in 1817. He settled in Philadelphia, and became an active member of the artistic community there. From 1819 to 1820 Shaw traveled through Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Mississippi, making drawings, oils, and watercolors of

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer, *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820-1880* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 43.



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popular views and life among the Native Americans and frontiersmen. These works associate him with other early chroniclers of Native American life such as Alfred Jacob Miller, George Catlin, and Albert Bierstadt. During his travels he also took subscriptions for his series entitled *Picturesque Views of American Scenery*, which was engraved by another English immigrant artist, John Hill, and published in Philadelphia by M. Carey and Sons in 1820.

In *Seven Hills: An American Landscape*, a glassy lake stretches across a panoramic valley and back into the seven rolling hilltops that reach into the sky. A small group of cows has gathered above the lake in the foreground, as a pair of sheep meander down to the lakeshore. Shaw's classically composed trees close the left hand side of the composition and cast shadows across the ground. The atmospheric perspective and the muted palette lend to the tranquility of the work.

Shaw remained in Philadelphia until around 1843, when he moved to Bordentown, New Jersey. He died in Burlington, New Jersey, in 1860. Throughout his life in America he exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Brooklyn Art Association, and the National Academy of Design, of which he was an honorary member. Shaw was also an inventor and between 1817 and 1843 he patented numerous improvements for firearms that later brought him financial awards from the American and Russian governments. His paintings are included in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Newark Museum, New Jersey; Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Institute, Utica, New York; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.