



Addison Thomas Millar (1860—1913)

Seascape

Mixed media on paper

12 x 22 inches (sight)

Signed lower left

Addison Thomas Millar was a highly regarded artist at the turn of the twentieth century. While primarily known as an etcher, his oil paintings, watercolors, and pastels were actively collected from the 1890s through the 1910s. Today, his work can be found in the collections of the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the New York Public Library, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Wichita Art Museum.

Millar was born in Warren, Ohio in 1860. His father, an immigrant from Scotland and a minister of the United Brethren Church, encouraged his son's artistic explorations. He facilitated the young Millar's painting lessons with a local artist, John Bell (1845—1895), in addition to his studies at the public school. After Millar won an art competition in the popular children's magazine *Youth Companion* three times in a row, from 1877-79, both he and his parents felt secure enough in his talent to send him to Cleveland in 1879 to study under another well-regarded local painter, De Scott Evans (1847—1898). Although Evans was known for his work in many genres, Millar concentrated on portraits and landscape while under his instruction. By 1883, Millar was in New York City studying at the Art Students League where he concentrated on etching and painting. In 1892, he travelled to Southampton to study landscape painting with William Merritt Chase (1849—1916) at the Shinnecock Summer Art School.

This seascape pastel is most likely from his time with Chase in Southampton. Pastel as a medium was largely a nineteenth-century phenomenon, perhaps incited by James Abbott



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McNeill Whistler's (1834—1903) brief but popular series of pastels that he executed around 1880. Chase himself was an avid practitioner of the medium—indeed, pastel played an influential role in his body of work—and he was a co-founder of the progressive Society of American Painters in Pastel that formed in 1885. In this pastel, Millar is experimenting with Chase's pastel medium, depicting the breaking waves of one of Southampton's beaches. Millar's cool tones suggest early morning, the seagulls diving in and out of the water in search of breakfast before the intrusion of human beach-goers. Millar exhibits a high level of maturity as a young artist in this pastel, successfully communicating the melancholy mood of a quiet morning shore as well as a mastery of a relatively new medium.

Millar would later accompany Chase to Spain in the summer of 1895 or 1896, and perhaps to Algiers as well, as suggested by the many Orientalist paintings and etchings that Millar executed as a result of this trip. Prior to this time, Millar travelled independently to Paris in 1894 to study with Benjamin Constant (1845—1902), Henri Martin (1860—1943), and Giovanni Boldini (1842—1931). Millar returned to New York City in the late 1890s, where he enjoyed a good reputation as a painter and etcher. Unfortunately, not much is known from this later period of life, and he was tragically killed, along with his wife, when an express train going from New York City to Connecticut hit his car.