



John Marin and the New York School

By Warren Adelson

Sixty years ago, John Marin was voted to be America's greatest painter, as recorded in a 1948 *LOOK* magazine poll. He was admired by his younger peers of the New York School, the Abstract Expressionists, who saw his innovative paint handling and automatic response to nature as analogous to their work. Marin died in 1953, and his place in American art was soon eclipsed by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and others of the New York School. He was further overshadowed by Pop Art in the next decade. By the early 1970s he was nearly forgotten. In my four decades in the field of American art, I have watched Marin's market and wondered at the demise of his eminence. From the 1970s to the present, his reputation existed solely on his early works on paper that related him to the Stieglitz group; Marin was classed as an early modern along with Demuth, Sheeler, O'Keeffe and others. The action painting of his later oils was not simply dismissed; it was as though it had not existed.

Although this exhibition and sale is comprised of only fourteen oil paintings, we feel the canvases herein amply represent the artist's contribution to his time. These works have been selected from the artist's estate based on their enduring quality and peerless paint handling. It is our hope to correct today's flawed image of one of America's supreme 20th century painters. Bill Agee has written an incisive and thoughtful essay, and he rightly places John Marin in a proper perspective. We are grateful to Bill and to the people who have made this exhibition possible, including Lisa Hankin, Todd Masters, Hubbard Toombs, Jan Adelson, and the others who encouraged this endeavor.

This essay appeared in the catalogue published on the occasion of John Marin: The Late Oils November 7th, 2008 through February 6th, 2009.