

238 Putnam Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
March 5, 1994

Ms. Kay Childs  
American Painting and Sculpture Department  
Sotheby's  
1334 York Avenue  
New York, NY 10021

Dear Ms. Martin:

RE: Study of a Man, oil on board, 13 5/8 x 17 inches [my measurements]. Initialed lower right: "E. J."

I examined this painting at Sotheby's on February 15, 1994. In my opinion the work is an authentic Eastman Johnson painting, and I will include it in my catalogue raisonné.

The painting relates to two themes in Johnson's oeuvre: old sea captains of Nantucket, and old men reading the Bible. Most of the dated paintings on these themes were done between 1875 and 1887. (I am enclosing a photocopy of a work, Study for Reading the Bible, that is oil on paper mounted on board, 18 x 12 inches, private collection.)

The theme of old sea captains is especially relevant when we study the sketch in graphite on the back of the board. (And I want to thank you for sending me the photograph of this.) The sketch depicts the scene Johnson developed into the painting The Nantucket School of Philosophy, 1887, oil on panel, 23 1/4 x 31 3/4 inches, collection Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Studies for this painting are also called "Shoemaker Haggarty's Shop." The figure seated in a chair in the middle of the sketch is Captain Moore. The other empty chairs are filled with figures in The Nantucket School of Philosophy. A small Study of Captain Moore, not dated, oil on canvas, 7 x 9 1/4 inches, came on the market about ten years ago. I am enclosing photocopies of photographs of both The Nantucket School of Philosophy and Study of Captain Moore.

I cannot identify the figure in your Study of a Man, but the style of the painting is typical of Johnson's late oil sketches. Johnson deftly executed this painting with wide brushes and

thereby caught the broad highlights of the reflection of light on the open book, on the subject's forehead, nose and shirt. Although just an oil sketch, the figure is quite well realized.

The massing of lights and darks on his face and head are especially well done, with the eye socket a uniform dark mass. The side of his head is also in shadow, but wisps of white hair catch the light.

Re: Study of a Man

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Regarding the title, I would like to see it called, "Study of a Man," with a date of mid-1880s. If more information comes to light, I will be in touch with you or the new owner.

Sincerely,

Patricia Hills  
author, Eastman Johnson, 1973  
[Professor of Art History,  
Boston University]