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Cambridge, MA 02139  
October 16, 2001

FAX 212/606-7039  
Ms. Valerie L. Westcott  
Assistant Vice President  
American Paintings, Drawings and  
Sculpture Department  
Sotheby's  
1334 York Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Ms. Westcott:

Re: Eastman Johnson, Under the Vines, oil on canvas, 17 1/4 x 21 3/8 inches. Signed L.R. "E. J."

I examined this oil painting on October 5, 2001, at Sotheby's. In my opinion it was executed by the American genre and portrait painter, Eastman Johnson (1824-1906). I will include the painting in my forthcoming catalogue raisonné.

It is likely that the site of the picture is a backyard on Nantucket, where Johnson and his family summered beginning in 1870 when his daughter Ethel was an infant. It is clearly a summer scene with its large grape leaves and ripening green grapes. Johnson has articulated the structure and the steps using convincing perspectival lines, and, as always, uses light and dark to reinforce the three dimensionality of the scene. The luminous shadows are particularly well done. The detail of the drain pipe bending down toward the rain barrel is exactly the kind of touch Johnson would have done. The woman sitting to the left, engaged in sewing, is another convincing touch.

An educated guess as to the date would be the 1870s.

According to my records this painting was reproduced in The Art Journal 23:3 (Spring 1964), p. 234.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills, art historian  
and author of Eastman Johnson