

238 Putnam Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
March 13, 1997



Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Eastman Johnson, Study for Fiddling His Way, oil on board, 19 7/8 x ~~3 3/4~~ inches.
Initialed L.R.: "E J" 8 3/4

I examined this painting on March 4, 1997, at Vose Galleries in Boston. 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.

There are several versions of Johnson's painting Fiddling His Way, 1866, Chrysler Museum, which was exhibited at the National Academy of Design and also at the Paris Exposition in 1867. The major finished work has the African American man playing the fiddle at the left. Johnson was obviously working out ideas as to how to include African Americans as the subject in integrated scenes, and I believe your painting was one of the compositions in which he was trying to work this out. The painting of the woman holding the broom is firmly drawn, with the characteristic graphite lines along the contour of her profile, her hands, along her neck and the back of her shoulder, etc. This suggests that he had previously made a drawing and then transferred the drawing to the board. The turquoise skirt with olive green tones underneath are characteristic of the colors he often used. The luminous sienna shadows in the background are also characteristic. The face of the African American man is somewhat more tentative, and his clothing is painted with a more brushy stroke than the woman. In photographs his eye looks like a cat's eye, but upon inspection one notes that the surface of the academy board had a tiny fleck that raised the surface just where his eye is drawn. The setting seems more like the interior of a barn than the rustic living space of the final version. That would suggest that your painting is a study before, rather than after, the principal work.

Examination with an ultra violet light indicated some restoration.

The painting was at the Hirschl and Adler Gallery in 1980 and at some point at

Christie's, because I have a Christie's transparency with stock number "FM944/1". I do not seem to have a record as to when I received the transparency.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills, art historian