

36 Harrison Street
Brookline, MA 02146
September 5, 1984

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

It was a pleasure to chat with you last Friday about the Eastman Johnson oil sketch of a Mother and Child.

As I mentioned, it is a painting which I saw on October 17, 1980, when a representative from the auction house Robert W. Skinner, Inc. brought it by for my opinion.

I told the Skinner's person, as I told you on Friday, that the painting has the feel, the sensibility, and the characteristic details of Johnson's oil sketches. The touches of color--especially the turquoise on the pillow and on the child's stocking and the reddish-brown translucent tones--are characteristic of Johnson. The subject is very typical--a mother reading or otherwise caring for her child. There does, in fact, seem to be an increase in such subjects in the period of the late 1870s and early 1880s when Johnson's daughter, Ethel, was growing up. (His only child, Ethel, was born in May 1870.)

The work is obviously a sketch--a working out of a variation on a theme. As far as I know, there are not ^{any} more finished versions of this particular version. I will let you know if I should see another.

To me, the outstanding Johnson characteristic--and so noticeable in this painting--is the picturesque outline of the woman's head and neck tie in profile. The downward glance of the child is also typical; Johnson did any number of paintings of his daughter looking down at rabbits held in her lap.

We could certainly speculate that the models would have been his wife and Ethel.

I hope my remarks have been of some help to you.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills