

Patricia Hills
239 Putnam Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

April 6, 2016

Philip Tierney, Esq.



Dear Mr. Tierney:

Re: Eastman Johnson, *Savoyard Boy Counting Coins*, not signed, not dated. Oil on cradled wood panel, 29 x 24 ¼ inches. [The title is my own, based on the painting's similarity to other works. Alternate title would be "Chimney Sweep."]

I viewed this painting for the first time at Adelson Galleries of Boston, on April 1, 2016. In my opinion the work is by the American genre and portrait painter Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), and I plan to include the work in my catalogue raisonné of the artist's work.

The work is related to (at least) three other paintings of Savoyards painted by Johnson when he was at The Hague. They are:

[1] *The Savoyard Boy*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 37 3/8 x 32 1/16 inches. Brooklyn Museum. Reproduced in Teresa A. Carbone and Patricia Hills, *Eastman Johnson: Painting America*. Brooklyn Museum, 1999, p. 27. Also reproduced in Patricia Hills, *Eastman Johnson*. Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972, p. 19. This is also a three-quarter length study of the youth (same features as your painting) standing against a wall with vines.

[2] *The Savoyard*. Oil on canvas, 36 x 29 inches. Not dated. No. 75 in the 1907 Sale of Johnson's work. The text reads:

The full-length figure of a young lad, dressed from head to foot in the characteristic costume of a chimney sweep, his right arm akimbo and his left hanging from his side. He stands in full sunlight leaning against a rough plastered wall, and on the left is a door closed by hasp and padlock, while on the right is a grape vine growing and clinging against the wall. His soot sack and broom lie on the ground near him. Height, 36 inches; width, 29 inches.

Most recently in a Wisconsin private collection, inherited from W. B. Cogswell, a Johnson relative.

[3] *Savoyard Boy*. Oil on canvas mounted on Masonite-like board, 34 7/8 x 27 7/8 inches. Signed lower left: "E. Johnson/ Hague 1853". This painting is similar to the full-length figure in the 1907 Sale version, and it came up at auction at Christie's in 1998.

As to the title, I quote Teresa A. Carbone from the 1999 Brooklyn Museum catalogue, p. 26: "The subject, generally popular in European painting of the period, represents one of the many young boys of the Savoy region of the Italian Alps who commonly eked out meager livings as traveling street performers or chimney sweeps in more prosperous European towns." I would recommend reading her extended discussion.

Your painting can be described as a three-quarter length portrait of a standing youth, wearing a grey hooded jacket. His face is turned, in an almost profile view, as he looks down at his left fist and seems to be counting with his right finger. (The background is similar to a portrait background, rather than the walls seen in the other Savoyard versions.)

The painting is highly finished as are other works by Johnson of this time, when he was becoming a highly acclaimed portrait painter. The brushwork is characteristic of Johnson's work, the light-dark modeling of the face is very well done, and the texture on the lighted cheek is characteristic. The lips have Johnson's typical cupid's bow shape, and the coral pink coloring is also characteristic. Like the other Savoyard paintings, I would say that it was done at The Hague about 1853.

I examined the painting under an ultra-violet light. It seems that the work has had some conservation/restoration, and the surface is now covered with what is known in the trade as a "masking varnish." This totally obliterates any analysis one can glean with the use of an ultra-violet light. I suspect there may have been some restoration, since the outline on the youth's cheek is somewhat thicker than is usual to Johnson. (If you have a conservator's report, I would appreciate having a copy for my records.)

This is a museum quality painting. Please let me know if it travels out of your family.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills, PhD
Director, Eastman Johnson
Catalogue Raisonné Project

pathills@bu.edu