

George M. Bruestle (1871 - 1939)

The Barnyard, 1902

unsigned

inscribed "Society of Am. Artists" and dated "1902" verso

oil on board

12" x 16"

The son of immigrants, George M. Bruestle was born and raised in New York City. He began his lifelong career in art in 1886 with enrollment at the Art Students League. The same year, Bruestle made his first trip to Essex, Connecticut, where he found inspiration in the verdant countryside and sweeping vistas that frame the Connecticut River. He made his first trip to Paris in 1890, and returned to the United States displaying a newfound impressionist inclination in his palette and brushwork. Trained previously as an illustrator and employed by *Harper's Bazaar*, his educational ventures in New York and Paris prepared him for a transition into oil painting (1). In 1900, when the Old Lyme Art Colony was officially formed, he was spending time in nearby Hadlyme, Connecticut, and soon became one of the earliest Impressionist painters at the colony.

Influenced by the French Impressionists, he became impassioned with painting the effects of sunlight. Additionally, he was influenced by the academies in New York and Paris where he developed an expertise in drawing, as well as a fondness for the later works of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875). His exposure to these various sources blended with certain regional influences through the free exchange of ideas that characterized the art colonies and clubs of the day. His adaptation of impressionist techniques, when combined with a stylistic tendency toward structural forms and compositions of the Lyme landscape, resulted in a distinctive hybrid style (2).

The Barnyard presents an intimately close and cropped composition, qualities which can be attributed as hallmarks of the French Impressionist style. Sunlight and shade create crucial tonal elements in the artwork as the sun, low on the horizon and hidden by the barns, infuses the scene with the warm glow of daybreak. The emphasis on structure and heavy texture that appear in the foreground contrast with a softened sky, and calls attention to the two-dimensionality of the surface in a highly impressionist manner.

In 1905 the Bruestles bought a house in the Hamburg section of Lyme. He, his wife, and his son, future artist Bertram Bruestle (1902–1968), spent their summers there while maintaining a winter residence in Manhattan. He was an active member in the artistic communities of both locales, belonging to the Society of American Artists, where *The Barnyard* was exhibited in 1902, the National Arts Club, Allied Artists of America, the Salmagundi Club, the Lotos Club, the Lyme Art Association, and Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts. Venues in which he was exhibited include the Art Institute of Chicago, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Corcoran Gallery, Lyme Art Association, National Academy of Design, Paris Salon of 1895, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Bruestle passed away in 1939 in New Haven, Connecticut (3).

Provenance: From the estate of the artist, to the gallery.

Bibliography:

1. Amy Kurtz Lansing and Amanda C. Burdan, *Lyme in Mind: The Clement C. Moore Collection*, exhibition catalogue (Old Lyme: Florence Griswold Museum, 2009), 20.
2. Michael Lloyd, *To Lyme: Rediscovering the Art of George M. Bruestle*, Exhibition Catalog from The Cooley Gallery, 1994.
3. Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *Who's Who in American Art: 1564-1975*, vol 1. (Madison: Sound View Press, 1999), 481.