

George M. Bruestle (1871 - 1939)

A Village Wayside, 1905

signed "Bruestle" and dated "1905" lower right

inscribed with title and signed again 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. 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. In addition, he was influenced by the academies that he attended 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 (1).

Bruestle's preoccupation with sunlight and shade creates strong contrast in *A Village Wayside*, as the light plays across the warm colored buildings of Lyme. This detail, in addition to the impending gray clouds, foreshadows a rapid change in weather. The artist's loose brushstrokes and *plein air* technique were used to quickly capture the passing moment, one that is beautiful in its immediacy and lends a narrative quality to the work. A wide dirt road draws the viewer into the composition, and directs them towards the houses which offer a comfortable haven from the approaching storm. The composition is sinuous and energetic in its application of paint, qualities which allow the viewer fluid movement throughout the painting; not any one element is in competition to be the focal point. The paint sits heavily on the canvas and calls attention to the two-dimensionality of the surface, in a highly impressionist manner.

A Village Wayside, dated to 1905, was created in the same year that 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 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 (2).

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

Bibliography:

1. Michael Lloyd, *To Lyme: Rediscovering the Art of George M. Bruestle*, Exhibition Catalog from The Cooley Gallery, 1994.

2. Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *Who's Who in American Art: 1564-1975*, vol 1. (Madison: Sound View Press, 1999), 481.

