

William Hamilton Gibson (1850 - 1896)

A September Day, 1891

signed and dated lower right

pastel on paper

20 ½" x 29 ¾"

Who Nature loves by Nature is beloved.

- From the poem "William Hamilton Gibson" by Rossiter Johnson

In 1901, John Coleman Adams wrote, "Three men have done more than any others to inspire our generation with the love of nature. They are Henry D. Thoreau, John Burroughs, and William Hamilton Gibson" (Swarthout). As a self-taught artist, writer, and naturalist, Gibson found inspiration for his work in the rolling hills and pastoral beauty of Litchfield county in Connecticut. He worked at his family's investment firm until his father's death in 1868. It was then that Gibson abandoned the failed business and began to enthusiastically devote his life to the study of nature, depicting its beauty in both word and illustration. What he lacked in scholarly training, he made up for by his intrinsic skills of acute observation and attention to detail, as is evidenced by artworks such as *A September Day*.

A September Day is a pastoral landscape which reflects the subdued tints and tones of autumn. The scene is harmonized by a diffused sunlight and overlapping forms, which allow the viewer's eye to fluidly observe the entire composition. *A September Day* provides a testament for Gibson's exceptional abilities as a witness and artist. "In no one man was the gift of observing animals and plants and the power of describing what he saw, both verbally and pictorially, so well developed" (1).

Gibson's first works were illustrations published by the Frank Leslie Company and appeared in *The Chimney Corner* and *The Boys' and Girls' Weekly*. He soon began to provide botanical drawings for *The American Agriculturalist* and *Appleton's Encyclopedia*. In a letter to a friend in 1869 he wrote, "This work perfectly fascinates me. It has always been my choice; it always will be. I shall never be happy if I have to abandon it" (2). From the late 1870s he became well known as an author and illustrator of nature articles which appeared in the prominent *Harper's Weekly*, *Scribner's Monthly*, and *Century* magazines.

Gibson first exhibited his work at the American Watercolor Society in 1874, and became a member in 1885. He also exhibited at the Boston Art Club. He passed away at the early age of forty-six in Washington, Connecticut.

Provenance: From the trade to the gallery.

Bibliography:

1. F. M. C., Review of "My Studio Neighbors" by William Hamilton Gibson in *The Auk*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (January 1898), 65.
2. Doris L. Swarthout, "William Hamilton Gibson: Artist, naturalist, writer" in *New York-Pennsylvania Collector*, 24 March 1986.