

Edward F. Rook (1870 - 1960)

Snow, Ice, and Foam (The Bradbury Mill), 1912
signed and titled on PAFA label of 1912, verso
oil on canvas
40" x 50"

A Favored Old Lyme Motif

Edward Rook arrived in Old Lyme in 1903, the year that marks the arrival of Childe Hassam (1859-1935) and the art colony's conversion from a Barbizon-inspired Tonalist aesthetic to American impressionism. Rook had spent the majority of the 1890s studying in Paris and returned to the United States in 1898. He purchased a home in Old Lyme in 1905, and began a career which was exclusively associated with the colony.

Rook stands apart from his contemporaries both in style and reputation. Coming from a wealthy family, he remained unmotivated to seek out patrons and New York galleries, or participate extensively in national exhibitions. His dynamic technique, visible in *Snow, Ice, and Foam (The Bradbury Mill)*, makes Rook's pictures unique among those by painters of Old Lyme. "Since the expression of strength and energy was among the major motivations for his work, rather than the colorful sweetness of much American impressionist painting, he did not enjoy the popularity accorded to many of his contemporaries by patrons and critics"(1). His large and striking artworks have earned him the status as one of the most original Old Lyme Art Colony members.

Rook displayed a strong affinity for painting the plentiful bunches of mountain laurel which grew in Old Lyme, as well as the defunct Bradbury Mill. Between 1905 and 1917, there are at least eight paintings which center on the rustic mill. One of his first examples was dedicated to Florence Griswold in place of a panel in the dining room, and the painting earned a coveted spot above the fireplace for many years (2). *Snow, Ice, and Foam (The Bradbury Mill)* is a prime example of the beloved local landmark in Rook's signature style. The large canvas is imbued with an incredible sense of space and vivacity. The foreground, middle ground, and background are inventively organized on planes that recede into the distance in a zigzag, which creates an expansive quality in all directions. The shadows of the leafless trees against the fresh snow have a jeweled quality, as different shades of light blue and lavender dance across the surface. These tones are echoed throughout the composition, particularly in the building and the swirling waters which rush from the dam. The calm scene is complimented by a clear blue sky, which offers a promise of respite from the snowfall.

-CRM

Provenance: From a private Connecticut collection to the gallery.

Bibliography:

1. William H. Gerds, *Masterworks of American Impressionism* (Einsiedeln: Karl-Ulrich Majer, 1990), 128.
2. Florence Griswold Museum Online Resources, Fox Chase Icons, Edward Rook
<http://www.florencegriswoldmuseum.org/learning/foxchase/html/edward_rook.php>.

Presentation notes: Original signature lost due to in-painting. In a 4" reproduction gilt cove frame with leaf corner detail.

