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Robert Fishko, *Director*

JOHN MARIN
(1870 - 1953)

Sea and Boat Fantasy, 1944

oil on canvas

28 x 34 1/4 inches

signed and dated lower right: "Marin '44"
titled verso "Sea and Boat Fantasy"



Provenance

The Artist

The Downtown Gallery, New York, NY
(artist's dealer as of August, 1950)

Mr. & Mrs. James S. Schramm, Burlington, IA, 1950-2006
(acquired from the above)

Private Collection, New York, NY
(acquired from the above)

Exhibited

John Marin, An American Place, New York, NY, November 27, 1944 – January 10, 1945

John Marin In Retrospect: An Exhibition of His Oils and Watercolors:
Traveling Exhibition

Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C., March 2 – April 15, 1962
Currie Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH, May 9 – June 24, 1962

John Marin, 1870 - 1953: Olbilder und Aquarelle, Amerika Haus, Berlin, Germany, 1962

Landmarks of 20th Century American Art, Forum Gallery, New York, NY
November 8, 2018 – January 5, 2019

Literature

John Marin In Retrospect: An Exhibition of His Oils and Watercolors, Corcoran
Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1962, no. 18

Reich, Sheldon. *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonne*, Vol. II,
Tucson, AZ, 1970, p. 734, no. 44.18, Illustrated.

Brooker, Niccolo. *Landmarks of 20th Century American Art*, Forum Gallery, New York,
NY, 2018, pp. 68-71 and p. 69, Illustrated.

Essay

Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, John Marin was raised in Weehawken where from 1910-16 he painted a series of lyrical oil sketches with views across the Hudson River to Manhattan. He attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and the Arts Students League in New York before heading to Europe in 1905 where he gained recognition for his masterful black and white etchings of old-world monuments. In Paris, photographer Edward Steichen introduced him to Alfred Stieglitz who, beginning in 1909 exhibited and dealt his art work for the next thirty-seven years. With Stieglitz's endorsement, Marin brilliantly bridged both the first and second periods of American Modernism, and in 1936 was given a retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art. He worked extensively in both watercolor and oil, although he favored the latter throughout the 1920s and 30s. He thrived in urban and rural settings, both as the avant-garde artist in the bustling metropolis of New York as well as the authentic American maverick in rural Maine, where he first summered in 1914.

In the 1930s and earlier, Marin generally emulated in his oil paintings the opacity of his thickly applied gouaches. By the start of the 1940s, however, his style began to change as he started thinning his mediums and painting with broader, more gestural strokes. While leaving larger areas unworked, Marin otherwise attacked his canvases and paper with a jazzy and colorful calligraphy. His Maine scenes (where he continued to spend happy summers) seemed particularly liberated both in their linearity and in the sensual, serpentine fluidity of his paint application. Marin painted many of those coastline compositions near or at one of his favorite spots, a bluff called Cape Split close to the town of Addison. He clearly delineated his horizon line, demarcating sea and sky, fore and background as he evoked the complexity of the surf (*My Hell Raising Sea*, 1941) and the drama of the sky (*Movement – Sea and Sky*, 1946).

“The paint is scrubbed on to the canvas quickly, and line is applied with equal impulsiveness. The function of the line is different from that which it had been earlier: it does not outline painted forms or enclose them within interior frames; it does not outline the establishment of a geometric structure or relationship of parts. In an emotional, baroque manner it cuts across the picture, into space and back out to the surface. It is not the earlier rugged painted line that so thoroughly integrated itself with painting: it has become a definitely drawn line, maintaining its identity in regard to the brushed-in areas. {...} Marin again was seeking a new unity of line and color capable of expressing the joyousness of his spirit.” (Reich, Sheldon. *John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné*, Tucson, Arizona, 1970, Vol. I, p. 232)



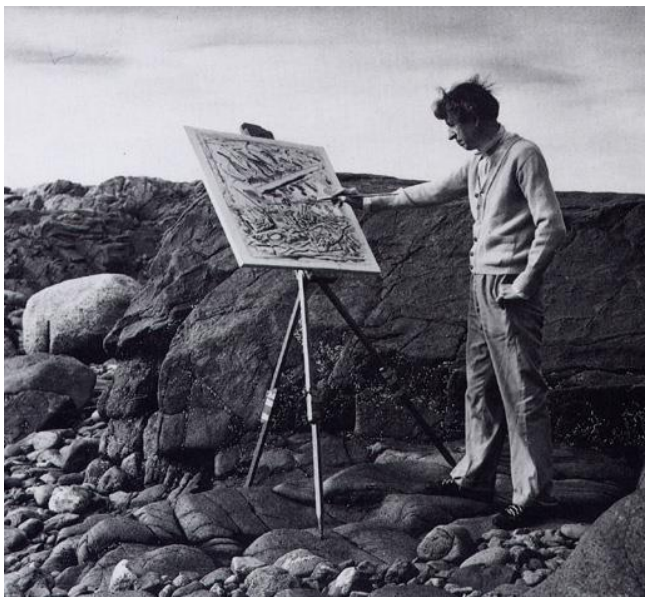
Marin, *Movement—Sea and Sky*, 1946
(coll. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Marin, *My Hell Raising Sea*, 1941
(coll. the late Barney A. Ebsworth, Bellevue, Washington)

Sea and Boat Fantasy from 1944 is a particularly animated oil painting. Through the craggy shoals of a rocky inlet, three distant figures prepare to launch their two-master into the open sea, which on this day is neither pacific nor perilous. Deep blues, aquamarines, and bright whites yield to swathes of taupe and ocher as three aligned cumulous clouds cast intermittent shadows over water and shore. As though his own essence rested within the scene, Marin echoed a longstanding tradition of American landscape painting by incorporating his signature within the composition itself, highlighting it with one of the very slashes of silvery paint that appear throughout. The artist's blitheness evaporated the following year with the death of his wife, Marie Hughes, to whom he had been married for thirty-three years. Shortly thereafter in 1946, Alfred Stieglitz, his invaluable dealer and the era's most important, also passed away.

Edith Halpert, founder of the Downtown Gallery, organized and opened a John Marin exhibition on December 27, 1950. It was the first solo show of his new works ever held at a gallery unassociated with Stieglitz. By this time Marin was enjoying the most notoriety of his career. A poll of two years earlier, conducted by *Look* magazine of both museum directors and fellow artists, had elected John Marin America's No. 1 artist. A new generation of artists and critics were examining his work at a time when, late in life, he continued to consistently work in oil. His palpable paint surfaces intensified and drew more attention to themselves than to the abbreviated pictorial structures they informed. When, in 1947, Marin testified to "using paint *as* paint" he foreshadowed what soon came to be an aesthetic ethos within vanguard art circles, a notion which spawned one of the great dialectics of contemporary art. John Marin died in 1953 in Addison, Maine, near his beloved Cape Split.



John Marin painting at Cape Split, Maine
(photographer unknown – estate of John Marin)