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Robert Fishko, *Director*

**PETER BLUME**

(1906-1992)

*Winter*, 1964  
oil on canvas  
48 x 60 inches  
signed and dated upper right  
“c Peter Blume / 1964”



**Provenance**

The Artist  
[Durlacher Brothers, New York, NY]  
Private Collection  
Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York, NY  
Private Collection, Wyoming  
Private Collection, Australia

**Exhibited**

***Peter Blume in Retrospect: 1925-1964***

Traveling exhibition

The Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH, April 18 - May 31, 1964  
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, July 9 - August 16, 1964

*Peter Blume*, Kennedy Galleries, NY, February 20 - March 9, 1968

*Collectors Gallery IX*, McNay Art Institute, San Antonio, TX,  
November 7 - December 25, 1975

*Peter Blume Retrospective*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL,  
January 10 - February 29, 1976

*Peter Blume: Selected Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures Since 1964*, New Britain  
Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT, October 3 - November 14, 1982

*Peter Blume*, Terry Dintenfass Gallery, NY, December 1987 - January 1988

***Peter Blume: Nature and Metamorphosis***

Traveling exhibition

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA,  
November 14, 2014 - April 5, 2015  
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT  
July 3 - Sept. 20, 2015

**Literature**

The Currier Gallery of Art, *Peter Blume in Retrospect: 1925-1964*, exhibition catalogue, Manchester, NH, 1964, no. 28, p. 22, Illustrated.

Kennedy Galleries Inc., *Peter Blume*, exhibition catalogue, New York, NY, 1968, cover, Illustrated, no. 27, cover and p. 31, Illustrated.

Museum of Contemporary Art, *Peter Blume, A Retrospective Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago, Illinois, 1976, n.p. [lent by Coe Kerr Gallery]

F.A. Trapp, *Peter Blume*, New York, 1987, pp. 117-22, illustrated  
Trapp, Franklin Anderson. *Peter Blume*, Rizzoli, New York, pp. 117-120, Referenced and p. 121, Illustrated.

Cozzolino, Robert. *Peter Blume: Nature and Metamorphosis*, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2014, plate 187, p. 305, Illustrated, p. 338, Illustrated as a detail, p. 348, Listed.

**Note**

In a career that spanned six decades, Peter Blume (1906-1992) forged an independent path as an American artist who engaged difficult subjects such as war and oppression. Blume used an allegorical painting style that fused disparate images of real people, places, and current events with natural forms suggestive of transformation, regeneration, and survival.

Blume's constant exploration of grand themes of growth, metamorphosis, life and death, culminated in a series of paintings depicting the four seasons. The Artist spent several decades preparing, beginning with a tour of Europe where Blume visited Naples and Stonehenge (which likely inspired the massive rock and boulder imagery in his later work), and followed by the Artist embarking on a series of study drawings, the first created in 1962 and featuring a rugged windswept island.

*Winter*, completed in April 1964, was the first painting completed in the series. A dedicated bird watcher, Blume observed the birds for hours in his backyard in Connecticut. The flock of vividly colored birds in pursuit of food in *Winter* suggests a message of endurance and survival, yet the snow-covered ground and the jagged rocks lend the terrain an otherworldly feeling.

Blume himself wrote about the unforgiving cold months spent in Sherman, Connecticut, and his inspiration to create a painting dedicated to the season:

“During winter up here, we feed birds. And we have vast collections of them. One night I heard a terrific crack and I went out the next day, and I saw a tree that had snapped near the base and was torn open but still attached at the base. And that impressed me. It became part of the picture, with the birds playing in the branches and eating down below, as did the conflicts between the various birds...When you watch birds for any length of time fighting for survival there is always a conflict among them. And when you’ve studied them for a while you can understand why one bird can become so heroic and take a stand and chase the other birds away and not let them get anywhere near him. He’s no bigger than they are, but he has this aggressive, dominant will, that makes him believe that he’s much bigger and stronger than his competitors, and in a pitched battle there just wouldn’t be any contest. It takes terrific determination to be supreme.”<sup>1</sup>

The symbol of such timeless natural elements was explored by the Artist in earlier works, notably the large-scale painting titled simply, *The Rock*, 1944-48. The painting was commissioned by the Edgar Kaufmann family, owners of Frank Lloyd Wright’s architectural masterpiece, *Fallingwater*, in the woods of Pennsylvania and was later gifted by the Kaufmann family to the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>2</sup>



Peter Blume, *The Rock*, 1944-48, oil on canvas, 57 5/8 x 74 3/8 inches  
(Collection of the Art Institute Chicago, Gift of Edgar Kaufmann Jr.)

*Winter*, is more of a “reflective calm” than this angst-ridden picture, as described by Frank Anderson Trapp in his Rizzoli monograph for Peter Blume, where he wrote about the Artist’s shifting focus during his later years:

“Recurring natural cycles and mythic truths more and more superseded historical insights on contemporary commentary as the dominant sources of thematic inspiration in (Blume’s) work. In two larger paintings, *Winter* (1964), and *Summer* (1966), his thoughts turned to the traditional, allegorical concept of the Seasons – if in highly individual, rather unexpected guises...The first in this cycle is *Winter*, which was featured in the most important retrospective exhibition of Blume’s work to date (at the Currier Museum)...The message of this work is unusually direct and boldly cast, but intricately implemented, as the rock becomes yet again a symbol of impervious resistance, in contrast to the more vulnerable elements grouped about it. In a very general sense, of course, the inspiration reflects a lengthening chain of winters spent in Sherman.”<sup>3</sup>

Trapp wrote further about the relationship of Blume to the great painters of the Northern Renaissance and Hudson River School, and how his *Winter* painting evoked “almost irresistible memories” of artistic masterworks such as Breughel’s great *Hunters of the Snow* and other winter scenes of northern European and American artists. He described, “Blume’s projection of an almost endless stretch of arctic-like flatland studded with rocks that emerge like islands in a frozen sea” and how the Artist’s return to the theme of winter eliminated all evidence of human presence, and instead depicted, “the persistence of life in the face of overwhelming physical odds...symbolized by the natural order, austere and silent but for the sounds of wildlife.”<sup>4</sup>

In the same year that *Winter* was completed, the painting was exhibited in the Artist’s major mid-career retrospective at the Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire, which then traveled to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. Also in 1964, Blume’s representative in New York, Durlacher Brothers, exhibited fifty-two drawings that include studies for *Winter* and many Italian scenes. Many of these drawings are now in the collection of the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art.<sup>5</sup>

Over the course of the next two decades, Peter Blume completed subsequent large-scale paintings and multiple accompanying study drawings of the four seasons in 1966 (*Summer*), 1984 (*Autumn*) and 1987 (*Spring*).

<sup>1</sup> F.A. Trapp, 1987, p. 117

<sup>2</sup> F.A. Trapp, 1987, pp. 82-83

<sup>3</sup> F.A. Trapp, 1987, p. 117

<sup>4</sup> F.A. Trapp, 1987, p. 116

<sup>5</sup> Cozzolino, 2014, p. 331