

Sale Name: February 2025 Fine Art

LOT 76 - Thomas Mower Martin



Estimate \$ 4000-6000

Description

Thomas Mower Martin

Canadian OSA, RCA [1838-1934]

THE LETTER

oil on canvas (relined)

36.25 x 58.25 in. (92.1 x 148 cm)

signed lower right

English born Thomas Mower Martin (1838-1934) emigrated to Canada in 1862, where he first established a homestead with his wife in Muskoka. Mower Martin had been interested in painting for most of his life and was a largely self-taught watercolourist. When the artist and his wife arrived in Canada, they found their first homestead to be unfarmable and moved to York Mills in 1863. Mower Martin is perhaps best known for his involvement with the Canadian Pacific Railway and was one of the Canadian artists commissioned by the company to document their expansion to the West Coast.

While recognized primarily for his skills as a watercolourist, Mower Martin produced and exhibited several large-scale scenes in oil during his career. "The Letter" is undated, but we can surmise the narrative: the farmer has received clearly devastating news, likely a death notice. It's possible, like many of the families across Canada throughout the early 20th century, he has received news that a soldier, perhaps a son or a brother, has died in the war. As he collapses into his grief, the community around him, animals included, gather and watch him with concern etched on their faces.

In 1916, in the midst of the first World War, Mower Martin, a member of the Swedenborgian Church (also called The New Church), published a leaflet through the

organization titled "The Broader View of War", which gives us more context into the artist's thought processes of what was happening in the world as he painted it: "That the root, basis and cause of the present war is that love of domination over others which has been the expression of 'man's inhumanity to man' since the earliest accepted records of history were written, is now generally acknowledged. It remains yet to be shown how and why it is occurring at this particular epoch of human history."¹

1. Martin, Thomas Mower, "The Broader View of War", The New Church Review, 1916

Quantity: 1



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