

PHYSICAL CONDITION REPORT

1. NAME OF ARTIST: JOHN STUART CURRY
2. TITLE OF WORK: JOHN BROWN
3. MEDIUM: LITHOGRAPH
4. DIMENSIONS: 15 3/4" X 11 1/4"
5. DESCRIPTION: YELLING MAN WITH SWORD WTH UPRAISED ARM - TORNADO
IN BACKGROUND - COVERED WAGONS IN BACKGROUND - BLACK AND WHITE
- ACC# 83-43-1 EIU# 077665
6. DATE RECEIVED: 1/25/83
7. RECEIVED FROM: STORAGE/ORIGINALLY GIFT FROM PAST PRESIDENT
QUINCY DOUDNA
8. PHYSICAL CONDITION WHEN RECEIVED:
FRAME CHIPPED AND SCRATCHED. BACKING SLIGHTLY RIPPED.
9. CHANGE IN CONDITION: _____
10. DATE OF CHANGE AWARENESS: _____
11. LENDER NOTIFICATION DATE: _____
12. BY WHOM: _____
13. AUTHORIZATION: _____ YES _____ NO

ACTION TAKEN: _____

JOHN STEUART CURRY

John Steuart Curry, the eldest son of Smith and Margaret Steuart Curry, was born on November 14, 1897, in Dunavant, Kansas. Moving about several times in his teens, he studied art at the Kansas City Art Institute, the Art Institute of Chicago, and Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. In 1919 he began work as a free lance illustrator, producing illustrations for numerous periodicals. His work as an illustrator continued until 1926, when he went to Paris and studied under the Russian academic painter Basil Schoukhaieff. He returned to America the following year and studied lithography at the Art Students League in New York under Charles Wheeler Locke. In 1928 he completed his *Baptism in Kansas* and began to be recognised as an important American artist. By the early thirties, he had had several one-man shows in New York and had received the acclaim of many New York critics. His success led to teaching positions at Cooper Union (1932-34) and the Art Students League (1932-36) and to commissions for several murals.

After completing commissions for murals for Westport and Norwalk High Schools, both in Connecticut, Curry received a commission for two panels (*Westward Migration* and *The Majesty of the Law [Justice Defeating Mob Violence]*) for the new Justice Building in Washington, D.C. These were followed, in 1938, by *The Homestead* and *The Oklahoma Land Rush* for the Department of the Interior Building. That same year he also began two large panels for the east and west corridors of Capitol in Topeka, Kansas.⁹ In the Topeka murals, Curry continued to explore a theme that he had

⁹Other murals for the rotunda of the building were planned but never executed.

pursued (even more vigorously in some designs that had been rejected) in his Justice Building paintings: the questions of slavery and civil rights.* One of these panels, *The Tragic Prelude*, is particularly significant, because it is related to the lithograph of John Brown in the Tarbell Art Center collection. Living in Madison since being appointed artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin, Curry was commissioned in the early forties to execute murals for the university's biochemistry building, the First National Bank in Madison, and the university's Law School library.

In addition to his many canvas paintings, murals, and lithographs, Curry also illustrated several books, among them: editions of James Fennimore Cooper's *The Prairie*, Mary O'Hara's *My Friend Flicka and Thunderhead*, and Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Curry died of a heart attack, in Madison, on August 29th, 1946.

Bibliography

Cole, Sylvan, Jr, ed. *The Lithographs of John Steuart Curry: A Catalogue Raisonné*. Introduction by Laurence Schmeckebier. New York: Associated American Artists, 1976.

Czestochowski, Joseph S. *John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood: A Portrait of Rural America*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1981.

Madonia, Ann. *Prairie Vision and Circus Wonders: The Complete Lithographic Suite by John Steuart Curry*. Davenport (Iowa) Art Gallery, 1980.

Schmeckebier, Laurence E. *John Steuart Curry's Pageant of America*. New York: American Artists Group, 1943.

*See Matthew Baigell's "The Relevancy of Curry's Paintings of Black Freedom" in University of Kansas Museum of Art, *John Steuart Curry: A Retrospective Exhibition of his Work Held in the Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, October 3-November 3, 1970*, ed. by [A.] B[ret] W[aller] (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1970; reprinted from the *Kansas Quarterly* 2:4 [Fall 1970]).

John Steuart Curry
John Brown (1939)
Lithograph
14 3/4 x 10 7/8 inches
Edition of 250

Permanent Collection
83.43.1
Gift of Quincy Dounda

Distributed by the Associated American Artists, New York

This print is very similar to the oil painting of the same title now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Both the painting and the lithograph derive from Curry's mural panel *The Tragic Prelude* for the Capitol in Topeka, Kansas. During the late twenties and afterward, Curry explored the themes of black freedom and black civil rights in a number of different compositions. The theme of John Brown's life was particularly appropriate to the Kansas State House, since Brown was a native Kansan. Simplifying the composition for the Metropolitan Museum painting and for the lithograph, Curry cut out many of the original symbols used in the mural. Lost are the Bible in Brown's left hand and the rifle in his right, the symbolic dead Northern soldier and Confederate soldier at Brown's feet, and the groups of free-soil and proslavery forces on either side of him. In place of these items, Curry has placed an awed black youth beneath Brown's right arm. Present in the mural, the painting in New York, and the lithograph are the covered wagons (symbolic of westward expansion) and a tornado (metaphor for the turmoil of the issues and Brown's confrontation of them). In all three representations of the fiery and defiant abolitionist, Curry's art stretches across the boundaries between Regionalism and Social Realism, those two dominant aspects of American Scene Painting during 1930s.

John Steuart Curry
Sanctuary [or Flood Relief] (1944)
Lithograph
11 3/4 x 15 3/4 inches
Edition of 250

Permanent Collection
83.162.1
Gift of Mildred Whiting

Distributed by the Associated American Artists, New York

There are two different versions of this lithograph, the first is nearly a mirror image of the one in the Tarbell Art Center collection. Only artist's proofs were pulled from the other stone; apparently Curry rejected the design in favor of this one.¹⁰ This is somewhat surprising, since also extant are two pencil sketches, the two images again facing in opposite directions.¹¹ Perhaps unable to make up his mind, Curry prepared two stones. This was not uncommon for the artist; there are several examples of reworked designs among his forty-three known lithographic compositions.

Sanctuary is thematically related to another composition showing a black family clinging to the roof of their house during a flood of the Mississippi River. The lithographic, the prototype for the artist's painting entitled *The Mississippi* (1935),¹² also appears in two different versions, both called *Mississippi Noah*, one from 1932 (for which there was only one artist's proof pulled) and a nearly identical composition from about 1934 (which was issued in an edition of thirty-five prints). *Sanctuary* is the allegorical equivalent of *Mississippi Noah*, as representative of man's struggle for survival.

¹⁰The Davenport, Iowa, Art Gallery owns one of the artist's proofs of the other lithographic version.

¹¹As of 1981, the two drawings were in the collection of the Kennedy galleries in New York City.

¹²This painting is in the St. Louis Museum of Art.

TAC# 916 B
Acc# 83-43-1

John Brown is a fourteen and three quarter by ten and three quarter inch lithograph done and signed by John Steuart Curry in 1939. The work was also signed on the stone in the lower right hand corner: "JSC 39." It was published and distributed by Associated American Artists, New York, and was an edition of 250. The print is similar in subject to the 1939 painting John Brown, and the 1940 mural The Tragic Prelude. According to Art News, May 1981, the lithograph sold for 1,600 dollars in an auction. This print was a gift from former Eastern Illinois University President Quincy Doudna.

Collections

Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Boston Public Library, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts (Ohio), Detroit Institute of Arts, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Fogg Art Museum (Harvard University), High Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum (Kansas), University of Oklahoma (Norman), Philadelphia Museum of Art, University of Illinois (Krannert Art Museum), Yale University Museum of Art.

compiled by Brady Roberts 10/12/84

Bibliography (Booth Library, EIU)

Czestochowski, Joseph S. John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood
A Portrait of Rural America. Columbia: University of Missouri Press,
1981.

Cole, Sylvan Jr. The Lithographs of John Steuart Curry.
New York: Associated American Artists, 1976.
Art News, vol. 80, May 1981, p.8.



JOHN STEUART CURRY (1897-1946)

27. *JOHN BROWN*, 1939

Cole 34, lithograph

Edition of 250 published by AAA

14¾ x 10¾ in.

Signed in pencil by the artist.

A fine impression of Curry's best known print. In excellent condition, apart from barely discernable light-staining, and printed on a full sheet, deckle edges on two sides.

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PRINTMAKING 1878-1987

November 3-28, 1987

Price List

1. Whistler	POR	26. Wood	\$3,700
2. Chase (pair)	\$5,500	27. Curry	4,500
3. Duveneck	2,800	28. Schanker	1,000
4. Moran	7,500	29. Drewes	1,000
5. Weir	1,500	30. Pollock	7,000
6. Cassatt	12,000	31. Schrag	1,000
7. Nordfeldt	1,800	32. Burkhardt	1,500
8. Dow (pair)	4,500	33. Avery	POR
9. Pennell	850	34. Crawford	5,500
10. Bellows	4,500	35. Albright	4,500
11. Sloan	2,500	36. Yunkers	3,000
12. Baumann	3,500	37. Wayne	3,000
13. Arms	7,000	38. Portfolio	POR
14. Hassam	4,200	39. Rivers	1,500
15. Hopper	POR	40. Motherwell	2,500
16. Weber	POR	41. Gottlieb	2,100
17. Cadmus	2,750	42. Dine	10,000
18. Marin	7,000	43. Frankenthaler	POR
19. Kent	1,300	44. Motherwell	8,000
20. Lewis	POR	45. Diebenkorn	POR
21. Lozowick	8,500	46. Katz	3,500
22. Marsh	3,500	47. Johns	9,500
23. Cook	5,750	48. Stella	14,000
24. Davis	POR	49. Thiebaud	POR
25. Benton	2,000	50. Frankenthaler	5,000

All works are subject to prior sale and price change; prices do not include frames.

Associated American Artists
20 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
(212) 399-5510



For Laura

ART & Auction Publication
January, 1984
page 104
(Review section)

Debbie

PUT in
File RE: John
S. CURRY

Dr



With the renewed interest in American regionalist art, it's not surprising that John Steuart Curry's print of the heroic John Broten (looking suspiciously like Charlton Heston as "Moses") sold for a good \$2,000 at Butterfield's in San Francisco on October 18.

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Charleston, Illinois 61920

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CLASSIFICATION:

PRINTS

TAC NO. 916B
ACCESSION NO. 83-43-1

OBJECT (Title): JOHN BROWN

DATE (Origin):

ARTIST (Origin): JOHN STUART CURRY

MEDIUM: LITHOGRAPH

DESCRIPTION: YELLING MAN WITH SWORD WITH UPRAISED ARM - TORNADO
IN BACKGROUND - COVERED WAGONS IN BACKGROUND - BLACK AND WHITE.

EIU# 077665

DATE REC'D: 1/83 RECEIVED FROM: STORAGE/ ORIGINALLY GIFT FROM
PAST PRES. QUINCY DOUDNA HOW ACQUIRED:

VALUE: PRESENT LOCATION:

CATALOGUER: DR

DATE CATALOGUED: 11/83