

JOSEPH KLEITSCH







JOSEPH KLEITSCH (1882-1931)

Studio Interior

Signed lower right, "J Kleitsch 1918"

oil on canvas

30 x 40 in. (37 x 47 x 2 1/2 in.)

76.2 x 101.6 cm (99.06 x 124.46 x 6.35 cm)

1918

8341

PROVENANCE:

George Stern Fine Arts

Private Collection, acquired from the above, 2012

EXHIBITION:

Pasadena, CA, Pasadena Museum of California Art, *The Golden Twenties: Portraits and Figure Paintings by Joseph Kleitsch*, March 5-August 6, 2017

Laguna Beach, CA, Laguna Art Museum, *Joseph Kleitsch: Abroad and at home in Old Laguna*, June 24-September 24, 2023

Joseph Kleitsch's *Studio Interior* (1918) is a compelling early work that reflects the artist's academic-realist foundation and marks a pivotal moment just before his relocation from the Chicago to California. Painted shortly before this transition, the work reveals Kleitsch's disciplined approach to composition and observation, shaped by his rigorous training in Budapest, Munich, and Paris. The scene depicts a quiet, lived-in studio space, where light enters through an open doorway to animate furniture, canvases, and everyday objects with a subdued yet attentive handling of color and tone.

The interior is constructed with careful spatial logic and an emphasis on structure, underscoring Kleitsch's preference for academic realism at this stage of his career. While in Chicago, his portrait and interior scenes were often distinguished by a "jeweled" palette—rich, saturated hues deployed with restraint—and that sensibility is evident here in the layered colors that enliven the otherwise low-keyed room. Subtle shifts in light guide the eye through the composition, balancing chromatic richness with solidity and calm.

In the years leading up to his move west, Kleitsch was actively involved with Chicago's artistic institutions, including the Palette and Chisel Club and the Art Institute of Chicago, situating him within a dynamic environment of evolving modern influences. During this time, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works were increasingly visible in American exhibitions. While Kleitsch maintains a measured realism here, the Impressionist influence was incubating; he would later become renowned as a "master of gorgeous color" owing to the high-keyed vibrant palette of his California landscapes.

Studio Interior has been exhibited twice, both times in California, as part of exhibitions highlighting Kleitsch's importance to the history of California art. Seen in retrospect, the painting offers a revealing glimpse of the artist's roots before his later, more luminous California landscapes would come to define his legacy.

ARTIST BIO:

Joseph Kleitsch was born in Banad, Hungary, and began painting at the age of seven. He studied in Budapest, Munich and Paris and became an accomplished portraitist before immigrating to the United States, settling in Cincinnati, Ohio. Between 1905 and 1909, he lived and painted portraits of prominent businessmen in Denver, Colorado, as well as Mexican President Francisco Madero in Mexico City. He returned to the Midwest in 1914, exhibiting at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1920, he and his wife, Edna, settled in Laguna Beach, where the village scenery — people along the eucalyptus-lined streets, flowers blooming in alcove gardens, and the pensive tranquility of the beach and isolation of the locale — became fresh subjects for him to depict on canvas. Unlike many landscapists of the time, Kleitsch was prone to reflect the spirit of the coast through its people — figures. His townscapes have the precision of photographs.

The information and material herein represents Gallery's best efforts and understanding of the current history and scholarship with respect to the provenance of the Work(s) of Art described and is not part of any warranty.









