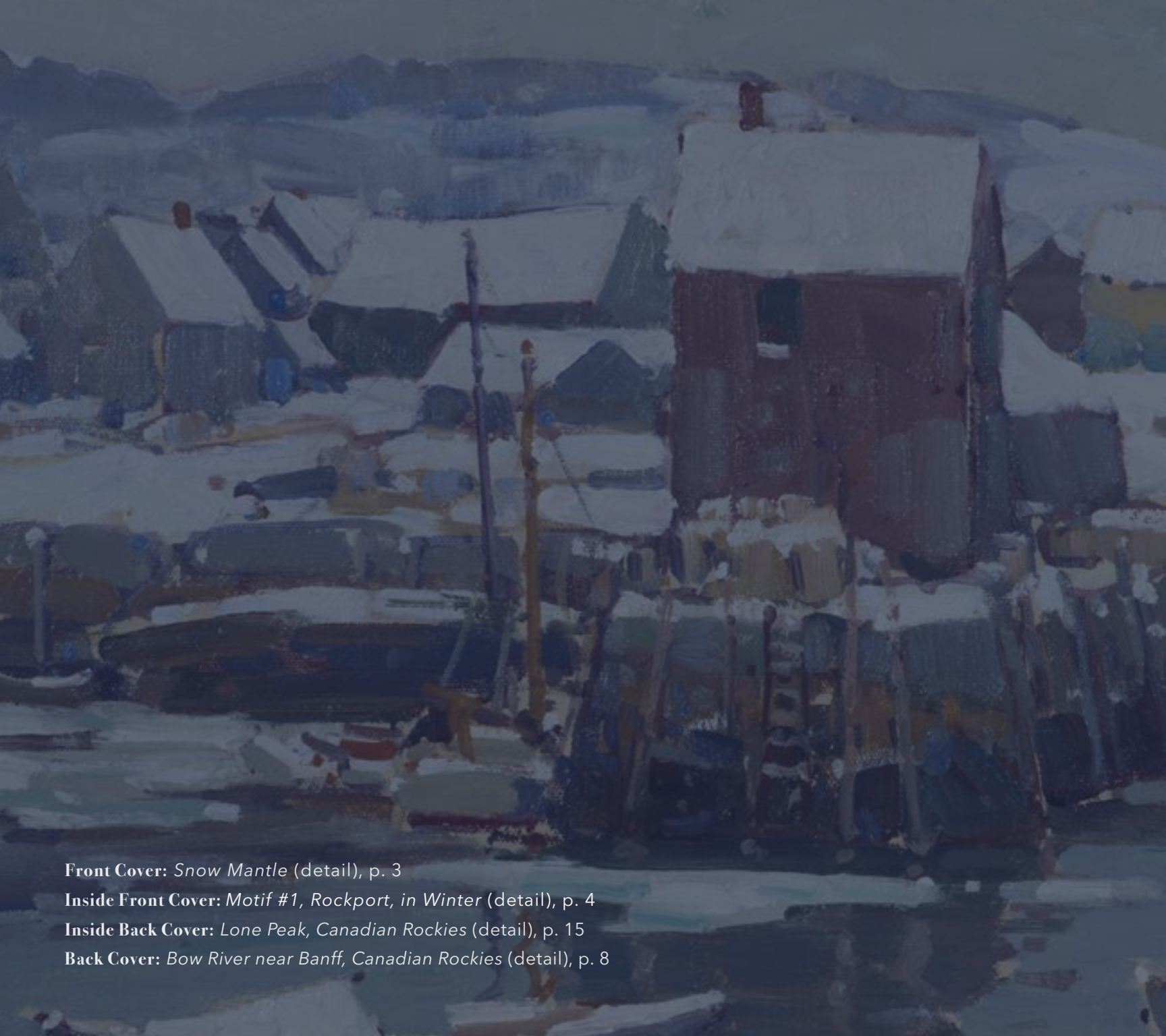


Aldro T. Hibbard  
*The Lure of Winter*



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**Aldro T. Hibbard**  
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November 7 - December 2, 2017

# In His Element: The Snowscapes of Aldro Hibbard

by Courtney S. Kopplin

New Englanders have long acknowledged a love-hate relationship with snow. We fall prey to its charms as nimble flakes gradually encase our world under a soft, white blanket, but awaken from the spell after enduring months of back-breaking shoveling and bone-chilling cold. In his work, Massachusetts native Aldro Hibbard (1886-1972) sought to enhance the former sentiment, braving the elements to capture the fleeting glimpses of winter beauty he knew and loved best.

Hibbard's earliest snow scenes were created around Belmont and Milton, Massachusetts, but it was on the advice of fellow Boston painter William J. Kaula that he first explored the hills and valleys of Vermont in 1915. He submitted winter scenes to the National Academy and Pennsylvania Academy in the late teens, and in 1919 held his first one-man show at the Guild of Boston Artists. The display, comprised entirely of snow scenes, was lauded by critic William Howe Downes, who ranked the 33-year-old artist among veteran snow painters of the time, including George Gardner Symons and Edward Redfield. Three years later, Downes outright bestowed the top spot to Hibbard:

*"He has something that the other American painters of these snow scenes, able as they are, do not possess – a superior subtlety, a sense of values, a faculty of lifting the work above the plane of stark realism, and giving it the look of a higher kind of truth than literalism can compass...in the final refinements which give distinction and beauty to the landscape of midwinter we believe Mr. Hibbard has no peer."*<sup>1</sup>

As the cold descended on New England each year, Hibbard would depart Rockport, Massachusetts, and settle into his Jamaica, Vermont, farmhouse, spending the next several months rendering the grand vistas and charming snow-caked hamlets found throughout his adopted state. The long Vermont winters not only provided an abundance of snow, but also the idyllic themes of bygone days – quaint clapboard homes, sprawling pastures, dense forest interiors – that were fast disappearing. He planned his outings well in advance by studying forecasts, dressing in layers, and even crafting a special

knit glove through which he held his brush before finally donning his snowshoes and trudging out to his chosen spot. Despite the hardships of painting in sub-zero temperatures against a biting wind, Hibbard amassed a portfolio of brilliant landscapes imbued with crisp mountain air coupled with an undeniable warmth. His snow, while frozen in life, radiates on the canvas, thanks to his inspired handling of light and color. Carefully designed and superbly rendered, Hibbard's compositions feel impromptu, a clever tactic made all the more essential for one at the mercy of Mother Nature. Perhaps his own words say it best: "The glory of winter is that you rarely have two days alike, and that's the challenge."<sup>2</sup>

Hibbard's love of cool weather and mountainous terrain also brought him to the Canadian Rocky Mountains in the mid-1920s, first on his own and later on his honeymoon with Winifred Jackman. An exhibit of these works at the Guild of Boston Artists in 1926 found an admirer in critic A. J. Philpott, who felt compelled to compare Hibbard's renditions to those done by John Singer Sargent a decade earlier: "But Sargent did not know mountains in such an intimate way as Hibbard. Hibbard not only gives you the spirit of the mountains in all their massive grandeur, but he gives you something else – an intimate something that others don't just get."<sup>3</sup> Western Canada's majestic peaks and glaciers offered the perfect backdrop for a snow painter and the studies he completed during these visits would inform compositions throughout his lifetime.

Aldro Hibbard's innate tenacity winter after winter paid off. Over the course of his storied fifty-year career, he earned numerous accolades and the admiration of collectors, critics and fellow artists, and several museums acquired snow paintings for their permanent collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. For New Englanders and for those in similarly chilly climes, his legacy of paintings serves as a reminder that, when the shovels are stowed and the boots and gloves lay dripping by the fire, the shimmer of sunlight on snow is a lovely sight.



*SNOW MANTLE*

Oil on canvas on aluminum, 42 1/4 x 36 1/4 inches, signed & dated lower left: *A.T. Hibbard '25*, 1925



*MOTIF #1, ROCKPORT, IN WINTER*

Oil on canvas on board, 15 x 18 inches, signed lower right: *A.T. Hibbard*

“There is always the hazard of frozen ears and frostbitten nose; and painting with stiffened hands in zero weather is, in itself, something of a trick.”

Aldro Hibbard<sup>4</sup>



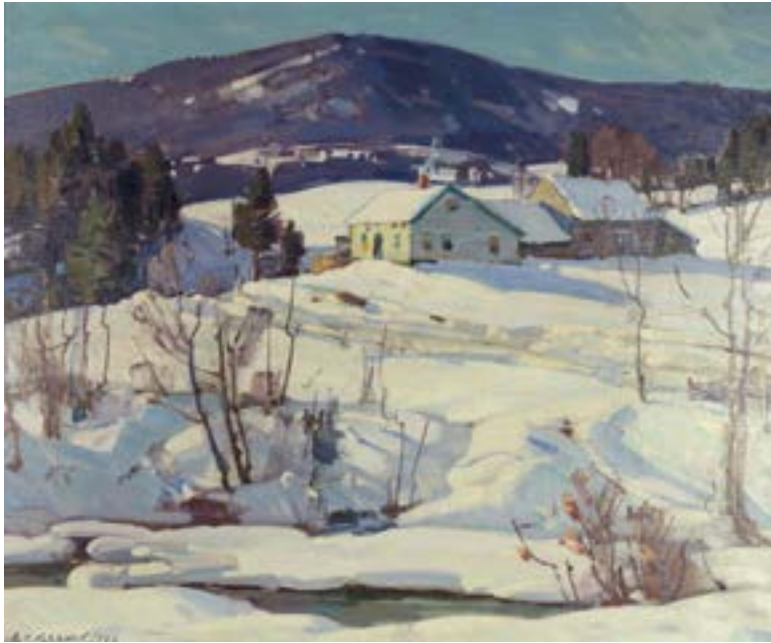
*BONDVILLE, VERMONT*

Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 34 inches, signed lower left: *A.T. Hibbard*



*WINTER LANDSCAPE*

Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 36 1/8 inches, signed lower left: *A.T. Hibbard*



## The Snow Man 1921

Wallace Stevens

One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time  
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,  
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think  
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,  
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.



### Above:

*MORNING SUNLIGHT, VERMONT*

Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Signed & dated lower left: A.T. Hibbard 1933

### Left:

*WINTER FARM AND CLOUDS, VERMONT*

Oil on canvas on board

16 13/16 x 20 7/8 inches



*BOW RIVER NEAR BANFF, CANADIAN ROCKIES*

Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 34 1/8 inches, signed lower right: *A.T. Hibbard*



*SUNLIT PEAK, LAKE LOUISE, CANADIAN ROCKIES*

Oil on canvas, 28 1/8 x 36 1/8 inches, signed lower right: A.T. Hibbard



*WHITE RIVER IN SPRING*

Oil on canvas, 36 x 42 1/4 inches, signed & dated lower left: *A.T. Hibbard / 1919*

Hibbard's name became synonymous with paintings of snow, yet his stays in Vermont usually lasted until late April, allowing him the opportunity to capture the transition between seasons as the slumbering trees and valleys emerged from the frost of winter. Admired for their subtle tones and atmospheric quality, scenes like *White River in Spring* were generally created during the artist's first few years in Vermont and rendered with the broken-color technique inspired by Willard Metcalf and the Impressionists. This painting, which has remained in the same Vermont family for three generations, also demonstrates his strength for composition and for interpreting sunlight on the gentle sloping meadow and elegant birch trees.



*CHIOGGIA BOATS*

Oil on canvas, 30 x 34 inches, signed lower left: *A.T. Hibbard*, 1914

Hibbard made his first and only trip to Europe in 1913-1914, after winning the Paige Traveling Scholarship from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The summer of 1914 found him in Capri, Venice and Chioggia, Italy, filling his sketchbooks and working *en plein air* to capture the charming residents and colorful vessels along the waterfront. Back home, he earned praise from critics after he exhibited these foreign works at the Boston Art Club, with many canvases rendered in the broken-color brushwork commonly found in his early work.



*VERMONT HOMESTEAD*

Oil on canvas, 21 x 34 inches, signed lower right: *A.T. Hibbard*

## **Woods in Winter** 1839

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

When winter winds are piercing chill,  
And through the hawthorn blows the gale,  
With solemn feet I tread the hill,  
That overbrows the lonely vale.

O'er the bare upland, and away  
Through the long reach of desert woods,  
The embracing sunbeams chastely play,  
And gladden these deep solitudes.

Where, twisted round the barren oak,  
The summer vine in beauty clung,  
And summer winds the stillness broke,  
The crystal icicle is hung.



*SNOW LADEN TREES*

Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 32 1/8 inches, signed lower right: *A.T. Hibbard*

*SNOWY LANDSCAPE*  
 Oil on canvas on board  
 10 1/8 x 13 5/16 inches  
 Signed lower left: *A.T. Hibbard*



*LINGERING SNOW*  
 Oil on canvas on board  
 9 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches  
 Signed & dated lower right: *A.T. Hibbard 17*  
 1917





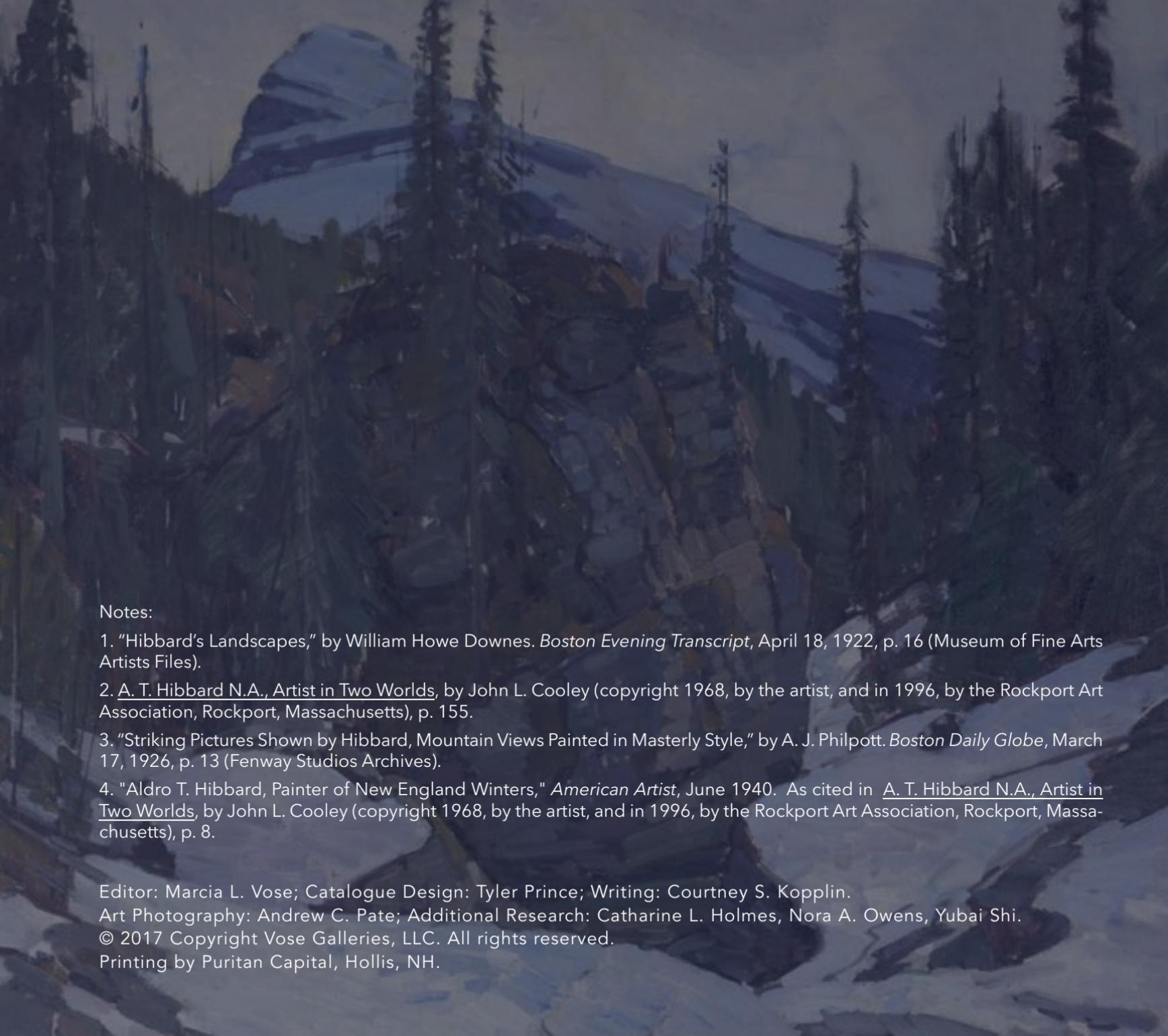
*LONE PEAK, CANADIAN ROCKIES*

Oil on canvas, 33 x 28 1/8 inches, signed lower right: *A.T. Hibbard*



*JAMAICA, VERMONT, NESTLED AMONG THE MOUNTAINS*

Oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 36 1/4 inches, signed lower right: A.T. Hibbard, circa 1920



Notes:

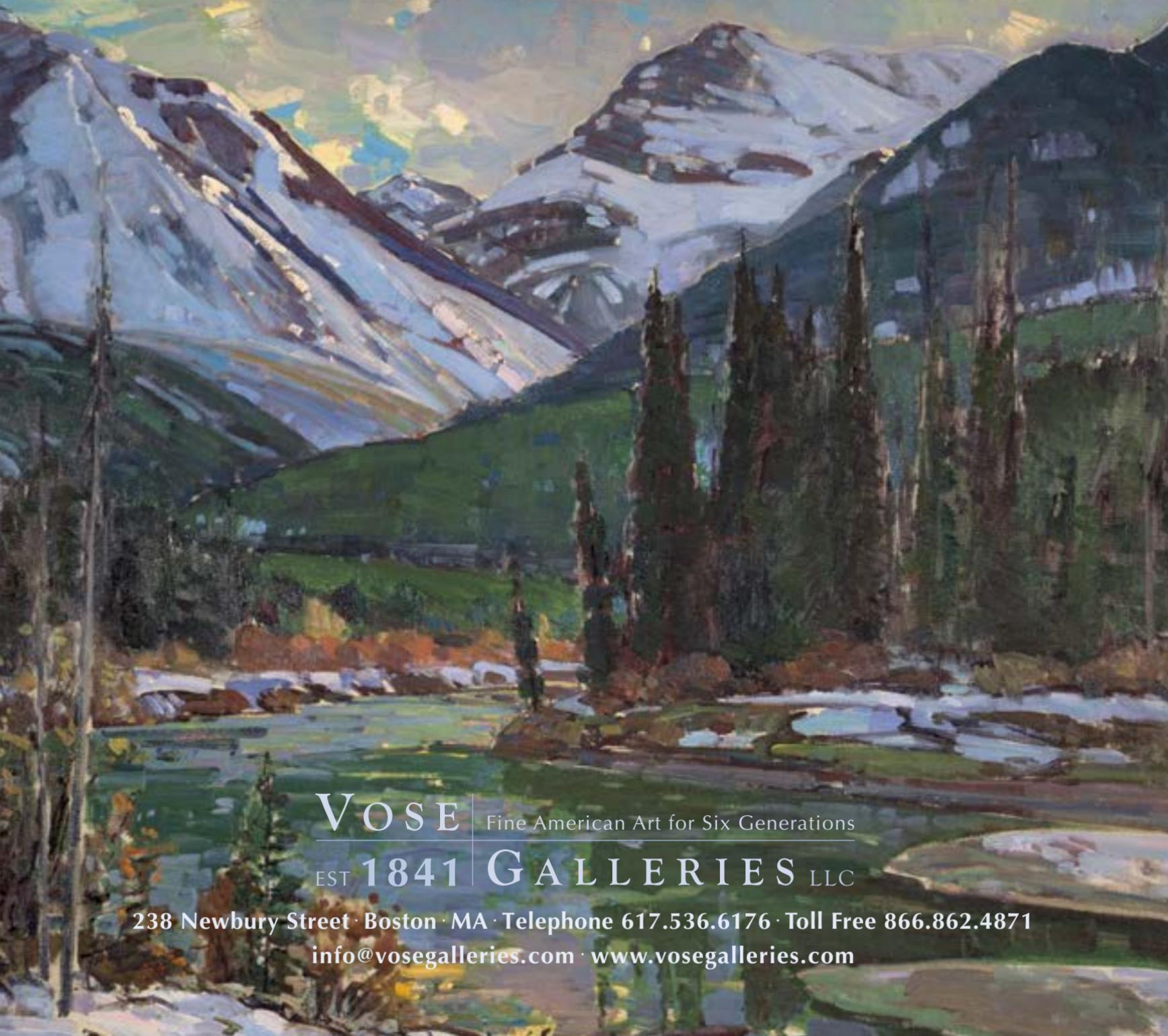
1. "Hibbard's Landscapes," by William Howe Downes. *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 18, 1922, p. 16 (Museum of Fine Arts Artists Files).
2. A. T. Hibbard N.A., Artist in Two Worlds, by John L. Cooley (copyright 1968, by the artist, and in 1996, by the Rockport Art Association, Rockport, Massachusetts), p. 155.
3. "Striking Pictures Shown by Hibbard, Mountain Views Painted in Masterly Style," by A. J. Philpott. *Boston Daily Globe*, March 17, 1926, p. 13 (Fenway Studios Archives).
4. "Aldro T. Hibbard, Painter of New England Winters," *American Artist*, June 1940. As cited in A. T. Hibbard N.A., Artist in Two Worlds, by John L. Cooley (copyright 1968, by the artist, and in 1996, by the Rockport Art Association, Rockport, Massachusetts), p. 8.

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