



William Thomas Smedley

Title

The Book Lovers

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1907

Dimensions

78 x 43 1/2 in. (198.1 x 110.5 cm)

Accession number

84.21

Credit Line

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gardner A. Williams, 1984

Web Description

The height of William Smedley's career as an illustrator came in the 1890s, after a decade of apprenticeships, academic training, and travel abroad. It was also the time of Smedley's most active participation in exhibitions and his growing involvement in portraiture and easel painting. Smedley was respected in the New York publishing world,

and the friends and contacts he met there soon became his patrons. The Book Lovers depicts a woman sitting under a tree reading a book, accompanied by a young girl holding a teddy bear and a little boy leaning on her side. Another woman in a hat and neck scarf stands behind the group, her arm around the tree trunk. The painting was made at the artist's summer home in Bear Lake, Pennsylvania, where his wife and children posed, according to the artist's granddaughter, Mrs. Gardner A. Williams, who later inherited the painting. Smedley won the Carnegie Prize for the painting in 1907. A critic at the time, Alan Pensler, said "The Book Lovers evokes many of the forces which shaped turn of the century American painting: Impressionism, the Academy and the portrait tradition."