



George Cope

Title

Rabbit and Squirrel Hanging on a Green Door

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1913

Dimensions

24 3/4 × 18 in. (62.9 × 45.7 cm)

Accession number

79.18.1

Credit Line

Gift of Mrs. S. Hallock duPont, 1979

Web Description

George Cope was born in 1855 near West Chester, Pennsylvania, and though he spent most of his life in the Chester County area, between 1881 and 1883 he lived in Philadelphia. It was during this period that he began to paint still lifes and, in particular, trompe l'oeil. "Rabbit and Squirrel Hanging on a Green Door" is an example of this clever painting style that fools the eye into believing that a two-dimensional painting is actually a three-dimensional object. An arrangement of dead animals may seem unusually macabre in the twenty-first century, but fish and game were popular subjects amongst Cope's patrons. Such trophies of the hunt were fitting decorations for men's studies and libraries. No wounds are visible in what appears to be a clean kill, but a drop of blood hangs, ready to fall, from the mouth of the rabbit. Hanging game after a hunt was a way of making it more tender and flavorful, and therefore was a common site in the home of a hunter. One must look closely to distinguish between the two dead overlapping animals in "Rabbit and Squirrel Hanging on a Green Door." The arrangement is perplexing—the two animals hang in such a way as to combine visually into a single animal, as the difference between the color and texture of the two animals' fur is barely distinguishable.