



Thomas Birch

Title

On the Schuylkill River

Medium

Oil on panel

Date

ca. 1820

Dimensions

21 5/8 x 32 1/2 in. (54.9 x 82.6 cm)

Accession number

2021.12

Credit Line

Gift of Gerold M. Wunderlich, 2021

Web Description

English-born Thomas Birch was an important Philadelphia landscape painter of the early nineteenth century. Although celebrated for his marine and naval battle images, Birch also specialized in landscapes more generally. He exhibited hundreds of paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and other annuals over the course of his career, the titles of which reveal that he painted far more river scenes and landscape scenes than marines. Emigrating from England with his artist father in 1794, the Birch family made their home in Philadelphia, where the art scene was dominated by the Peale family of artists. When Thomas ventured out on his own, he took up portrait and miniature painting. His landscapes can be seen as a foil to the works of Hudson River School artists, appearing as pastoral scenery rather than wild and strikingly dramatic. Not only was Birch influential among his contemporaries, but he also influenced the next generation of Philadelphia painters including William Trost Richards.