



Walter Murch

Title

Still Life with Lemons and Potato

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1945

Dimensions

14 × 14 1/8 in. (35.6 × 35.9 cm)

Accession number

93.15.1

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Credit Line

Purchased with Museum funds, 1993

Web Description

A devoted still life artist through his entire career, Walter Murch updated and modernized this traditional genre of painting. *Still Life with Lemons and Potato* represents an early effort, shortly after his first solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery, in which his personal style begins to emerge. The specter of eighteenth-century French still life painter Chardin haunts Murch's work of this period, especially in the low horizontal platform and vast negative space filled with muted light, but due respect is also paid to his contemporaries in the realm of Surrealism, known for the seemingly inexplicable juxtapositions of unusual elements on their canvases. In this example, individual pieces of straw, distinctly propped and placed throughout the composition, introduce a curiously delicate sense of balance to the scene. Murch's realistic representational style never faltered, though his combination of subjects became increasingly idiosyncratic into the 1950s and 1960s. A student of the influential modernist Arshile Gorky and a friend of many Abstract Expressionists, Murch's later work succeeds in securing the place of still life in mid-century modernism.