

Alfred Juergens' Twilight by Emily Hoffman

About the artist

My artist is Alfred Juergens, an American, 1866 to 1934. The painting I chose is called Twilight, painted in Chicago. It is a landscape at sunset or twilight painted in thick impasto oil paint. I chose it because it is peaceful, and the colors are beautiful.

Juergens led an interesting life, spending much of it in Europe. His father was a "failed" artist, unable to support his family as an artist, and thus did not want his son to follow his path. Juergens was born in Chicago and studied at the Academy of Design in Chicago which later became the Art Institute of Chicago. When Juergens' father died, his mother supported his travel to Munich Germany to study at the Royal Academy and also to Paris. Juergens' mother was born in Germany and his father in Prussia.

German artists were known for their realism and deep natural coloring. Juergens was an outstanding student. He began painting at age 10. He did sketches on site and then painted in his studio. When his mother died, he moved back to Chicago. He and other artists formed the Cosmopolitan Art Club. He exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1899. Postmortem, he exhibited at our very own KIA in 1966! A gallery owner in Kalamazoo bought about 40 of his paintings in 1956 or 1957. He also exhibited locally in Grand Rapids. Juergens' widow stored many of his paintings near Grand Rapids after he died.

About the painting

I have trouble distinguishing sunrises and sunsets, but here there is no confusion here because the painting is titled Twilight. It is a landscape of a lake in a rural setting, with beautiful reflections of the sunset on the lake. It was painted circa 1890 to 1892 (according to the wall listing, while another source says it was painted in 1910 while the artist was in Chicago). It is a smaller more rural lake than Lake Michigan, with many trees present. The frame is exceptionally nice. The painting was commissioned by Thomas Olson, a wealthy Chicago businessman, who purchased the frame in Italy for this painting. A review says this was Juergens' "strongest tonalist period". The colors in the sky are very strong and dramatic: blue, yellow, orange, and brown. The trees are almost black. One's eye is drawn across the sky and then looks at the same colors in the reflection on the water. It is a quiet and restful painting.