

Sugaring Off



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著者:Allen, Brian T.

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This lovely book provides the first comprehensive examination of Eastman Johnson's vivid paintings of a quintessential New England theme - the making of maple sugar. This series of pictures, executed during the 1860s, is perhaps the most ambitious project in the artist's career. Brian Allen discusses the ways in which Johnson's maple sugar paintings reflect a New England on the edge of vast changes, both in the technology of farming and in the social structures of small communities. He notes how Johnson conveys the tense, shifting relationship that existed between industrial innovation and New England's distinctive brand of community spirit, evident through maple sugar's close association with free labour, as opposed to cane sugar's connection with slavery. Presented here in full colour, Johnson's maple sugar paintings are both a celebration of New England and a commentary on a bygone era. This book is the catalogue for an exhibition organized by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts (January 18 to April 18, 2004), and traveling to The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California (May 11 to August 1, 2004).

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