

COLNAGHI



Pekka Halonen
Winter, 1930

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PEKKA HALONEN

(Lapinlahti, Finland 1865 – 1933, Tuusula, Finland)

Winter, 1930

Oil on canvas

73.5 x 50 cm

28 15/16 x 19 11/16 in.

Signed and dated lower left: P. Halonen / 1930.

Galerie Hörhammer stamp on the stretcher.

Provenance

Private collection, Finland.

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In an interview in relation to what would become Pekka Halonen's last solo exhibition in 1932, the artist's gave a remark which succinctly encapsulates his attitude towards art and nature:

"Art should not prod your nerves as if scrubbed by a coarse brush—it should grant peace. For as long as I can remember, I have not been able to see art in any other way. I have lived in the same house at the edge of the forest for over thirty years. I often feel as if I am the owner of the Louvre or that I possess the world's greatest artworks right on my doorstep."

Pekka Halonen came from a peasant family who had tilled the soil for hundreds of years where the serene southern Finnish landscapes meet the wild beauty of the sub-Arctic hills. Besides fulfilling his duties as a farmer, Halonen's multi-faceted father was an avid decorative painter and draughtsman, which introduced Pekka to art as a natural past-time inextricable from nature. Halonen's father was clear that he painted for his own pleasure, an approach which Halonen rigorously adopted as his own. Halonen's mother was similarly artistic, showing talent as a *kantele* player.² The naturalness and self-assuredness with which Halonen was able to interpret nature onto the canvas owed a lot to his creative parents as well as the sublime nature that helped shape him.

The present work, *Winter* (1930) demonstrates Halonen's mastery of the seasonal scene—a subject that became as good as synonymous with his name. Rolling mounds of snow dominate the foreground of the composition, concealing a rocky terrain beneath soft sculptural drifts rendered in dense, tactile brushstrokes. The deep brown central pine tree punctuates the white expanse, imbuing the painting with a subtle struggle between vitality and the sublime force of winter. The majestic tree, supported by an evergreen bush to the left and smaller specimen to the right, stand defiantly in a silent and slow storm beautifully rendered in a cool porcelain. Interspersed in the thick snowy atmosphere are delicate violet and red hues skilfully equipping the scene with an otherworldly warmth devoid of sun and heat. Halonen heightens the three dimensionality of the snow mounds and shadows of the trees through delicate modulations of darker purples and blues, intensifying the coldness while simultaneously realising a perspectival depth. The influence of Japonic art, which Halonen would have been introduced to as a pupil of Gauguin in Paris is clear in the painting: the sparse but decisive use of shadows and diagonal asymmetry skilfully leaves room for the colours to vie for attention whereas the snow on the ground is reminiscent of a frozen Hokusai. Though Halonen's influences were always integrated idiosyncratically they remained subservient to his greatest muse, nature.

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