

Albert Bierstadt Catalogue Raisonné Project

Rocky Mountain Sheep ca. 1880

Oil on paper mounted to canvas

13 5/8 x 19 in.

Signed lower left: *ABierstadt*

Provenance:

(Trosby Galleries, Palm Beach, Florida);

Mr. and Mrs. Lester Avent, New York and Palm Beach, ca. 1971;

Mrs. Grant William Breur, Englewood, Colorado;

Private collection, Wyoming



24 March 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Rocky Mountain Sheep is included in the Albert Bierstadt database being compiled in preparation for a catalogue raisonné of the artist's paintings. The composition, palette, subject matter and brushwork are consistent with this artist's oil paintings.

Rocky Mountain Sheep depicts the animal on a rocky precipice facing left but looking right. The ram's body is silhouetted against mountains and blue sky, his head against white clouds. The foreground, in shadow, is mostly rock with a leafless scraggle of branches in the lower right whose left-side limbs point toward the sheep, the painting's focal point. In the distance, sunlit ranges of the Rocky Mountains unfold behind the ram.

Although Bierstadt is best known for his landscapes, he was a very accomplished animal painter. Throughout his artistic career he included mammals, both domestic and wild, in many of his scenes. Bierstadt had two illustrating commissions that included several illustrations of wildlife in their habitat in the 1860s and 1870s (see fig. 1). In the 1880s he did several portraits of Rocky Mountain sheep and mountain goats. Like the subject painting, they place the animal on a rocky pinnacle above the viewer's vantage point and silhouetted against the landscape and sky as exemplified in *Rocky Mountain Sheep or Big Horn "Ovis Montana"* (see fig. 2).

In many of these big-game animal portraits like *Rocky Mountain Sheep or Big Horn "Ovis Montana,"* the animal dominates the painting and the landscape is secondary. In the subject painting, however, the landscape still plays an important role. The majestic Rocky Mountain sheep is surrounded by a wilderness that Bierstadt loved.

Sincerely,

Melissa Webster Speidel, Director

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Figure 1 Bierstadt, *A Mountain Range, with Black-Tailed Deer*, oil on paper, 13 x 18 5/8 in., Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, Wyoming

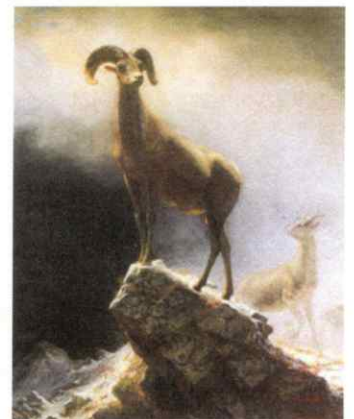


Figure 2 Bierstadt, *Rocky Mountain Sheep or Big Horn "Ovis Montana,"* oil on canvas mounted on board, 50 1/2 x 43 in., Private Collection, photo courtesy of Sotheby's