Basic Detail Report

The Poet Bears the Sorrows of the World

Date
c. 1890

Medium
Oil on paper mounted on canvas

Description
Elihu Vedder was one of many artists who addressed immigration, urbanization, and accelerating class disparities by turning inward, to the imagination. A study for an unrealized larger canvas, this painting reflects the nineteenth-century idea of the poet as a stand-in for the visual artist. Vedder himself wrote two books of poetry during his lifetime. After the loss of two sons in the 1870s, he struggled for decades with deep sorrow. With a melancholic expression and weary pose, Vedder’s figure bears the burden of life’s tragedies.

Dimensions
Sight: 11 × 7 in. (27.9 × 17.8 cm)