



Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller, *Children on Their Way Home from School*, 1836, oil on paper mounted on wood, 44.5 x 34.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

*Children on Their Way Home from School* (1836) by Austrian painter Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793–1865) demonstrates the Biedermeier style, which emphasizes uncomplicated scenes of everyday life depicted in a straightforward and realistic way. This genre painting also illustrates the preoccupation with peasant life that arose during the nineteenth century following

the Industrial Revolution. No longer content with their urban lifestyles, the affluent middle class developed an appreciation for narrative artworks that idealized humble living in the countryside. This painting shows two children on their way home from school. The road stretches behind them towards the town and the comfort of society. The road ahead is not visible, which suggests uncertainty. The children carry their books and the young girl is barefoot, emphasizing their inferior status as peasants. The girl meets the gaze of the viewer and seems fearful of moving forward. Her brother tries to comfort her, yet the large Watzmann peak looms menacingly in the background. While this valley scene, situated on the border of Austria and Germany, is exquisitely rendered, the children, illuminated by sunlight, are the primary subject of the work. This painting was owned by the prominent Viennese Jewish industrialist and art collector Viktor Zuckerkandl (1851–1927), and was given to his sister Amalie Redlich (1868–1941) following his death. After being stolen by the Nazis in 1938, the painting was eventually returned to Redlich's grandson, Georges Jorisch (1928–2012), who donated it to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 2013 as a gesture of gratitude for the hospitality he received when he immigrated to Montreal after World War II.

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