

John Atherton

Christmas Eve, 1941

John Atherton (1900-1952)

Oil on canvas

Christmas Eve was one of twelve paintings by Atherton that were included in MoMA's exhibition *American Realists and Magic Realists*. Through uncanny lighting, from a street lamp whose bulb is hidden from view and a string of holiday lights (the only thing directly relating to the work's title), and a car seemingly floating above a fence, which blocks our view of what is beyond, except for a gap through which we can see an old chair and other detritus in a seemingly abandoned lot, Atherton creates an alien landscape from the type of scene he likely encountered daily in the suburbs of New York City.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase, 1942