Primary Maker: Albert Bierstadt
Title: Donner Lake from the Summit
Date: 1873
Medium: Oil on canvas
Dimensions: Unframed: 6 1/8 × 10 ft. 3/16 in. (183.2 cm × 3 m 5.3 cm) Framed: 6 ft. 8 3/8 in. × 10 ft. 8 1/4 in. × 3 1/2 in. (204.2 cm × 3 m 25.8 cm × 8.9 cm)
Credit Line: Gift of Archer Milton Huntington
Object Number: 1909.16

Object Name: Landscape
Classification: PAINTINGS

Curatorial Remarks:
Bierstadt went to the summit of the High Sierras with Collis P. Huntington, the railroad magnate who commissioned a painting of this site to commemorate the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad. Despite Huntington's specific interest, the painting's title speaks more to the national memory of the ill-fated Donner Party—a group of settlers who became trapped by the onset of winter in 1846 and whose sensational story of privation, cannibalism, and death remains a source of gruesome fascination. A critic writing about the painting's public debut in San Francisco in 1873 noted: "The two associations of the spot are . . . sharply and suggestively antithetical: so much slowness and hardship in the early days, so much rapidity and ease now; great physical obstacles overcome by a triumph of well-directed science and mechanics."
Physical Description:
Landscape which depicts the summit at which the Central Railroad reaches its highest passage over the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in California; Donner Lake is below the mountain range.

Markings: **signed:** at lower left: "A. Bierstadt"

Related Objects: