

*California Dreaming: Plein-Air Painting from San Francisco to San Diego*

This exhibition presents a selection of early modern paintings that celebrate the topography of California. By the end of the nineteenth century, landscape painting had become the primary vehicle for depicting national identity in American art. California provided breathtaking scenery of newly integrated lands for painters working “*en plein air*,” or outdoors. This was an approach employed by cutting-edge artists in Europe, particularly in France, which artists in American then adapted to create a style that has become the hallmark of what is commonly termed Californian Plein-Air Painting or California Impressionism. In Northern California, an atmospheric, poetic and decorative style called Tonalism dominated from the established artistic community of San Francisco. Southern California was a mecca for young, modernist artists influenced by French Impressionism, a movement preoccupied with capturing immediate effects of light, color and ever-changing climactic conditions. The regional style of California Plein-Air Painting was created by a group of cosmopolitan painters, whose mobility was facilitated by the new railroad lines to the West Coast. While technically varied, all of the artists represented here were utterly devoted to reproducing the effects of light and atmosphere that characterize the natural paradise we aptly call the Golden State.