



**WILLIAM WENDT (1865-1946)****Spring**

Signed lower right, "William Wendt 1916"

oil on canvas

40 x 50 in. (51 1/4 x 61 x 2 1/4 in.)

1916

10363

**PROVENANCE:**

Private Collection, Southern California, acquired directly from the artist;

Private Collection, by gift to the daughter of the above, 1932;

Private Collection, by descent to the present owner

**EXHIBITION:**

Los Angeles, California, California Art Club, Seventh Annual Exhibition, October 5-31, 1916, no. 69

Detroit, Michigan, Detroit Museum of Art, Fifth Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists, April 16-May 31, 1919, no. 45

Toledo, Ohio, The Toledo Museum of Art, 1919

St. Louis, Missouri, City Art Museum of St. Louis, Fourteenth Annual Exhibition, 1919, no. 161

**LITERATURE:**

Catalogue of the Fifth Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists, exhibition catalogue, Detroit, Michigan, April 1919, no. 45

J.A. Walker, Documents on the Life and Art of William Wendt (1865-1946): California's Painter Laureate of the Paysage Moralisé, Big Pine, California, 1992, p. 187, no. 640

Spring, an unusually large-scale oil painting by William Wendt, depicts a huge expanse of blue, almost cloudless California sky over a wide, flat plain of verdant grass. The only other adornments to this landscape are stands of tall, thin trees that, in the forefront, seem to tower over the far distant snow-capped mountaintop. Wendt's Impressionist style is evident in the detailed brushwork that makes up the sky. Using short dashes of blue upon blue, Wendt builds the varying color from dark at the top to lighter blue as it nears the mountain on the horizon. Looking closely, the sky almost appears to be a mosaic, but from further back, the colors and strokes blend seamlessly to create its soft, pastel look.

William Wendt was born in Bentzen, Germany, and immigrated to Chicago in 1880. Although he took classes for a short time at the Art Institute of Chicago, he was a largely self-taught painter with a religious reverence for nature. Wendt co-founded the California Art Club in 1911, and within a year he was elected to the National Academy of Design and built his home and studio in Laguna Beach.

Often referred to as the "dean of Southern California artists," he became known for his ability to scout locations for ideal, naturally occurring compositions. His earlier, Edenic landscapes exude the hallmark lightness of traditional Impressionism, but he distinguished his work with bolder, block-style pastoral compositions with muted colors.

The masculine quality had an influential effect on the style of paintings in the American West. "Wendt's canvases grew in strength and boldness over his forty years of painting," Nancy Moure wrote in her comprehensive book, *California Art: 450 Years of Painting & Other Media* (Dustin Publishing, 1998). "He soon began to 'draw' with his brush, to carve out the underlying structure of the mountains, delighting in the folds of the earth."

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