



Three Spanish Figures

Date

c. 1915

Primary Maker

Charles Percy Austin

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

California paintings referencing the rancho days relied on the viewer's acceptance of the conflation of California and Spain, as well as familiarity with stock characters and themes. The man's traditional attire—his headscarf, cummerbund, sandals, and serape—were common to both the Iberian Peninsula and 19th century California. The purple mountains and sunlit spaces allude to perfect climate and diverse topography, while the overflowing basket of oranges symbolizes agricultural wealth and fertility. California was being promoted as America's little corner of the Old World, its Spanish legacy embodying cultural capital. This is one of three works by Charles Percy Austin to be donated to the museum in 1964 by Ralph Steven, who was married to Austin's sister, Martha.

Dimensions

43 1/2 × 55 in. (110.5 × 139.7 cm)