

# Basic Detail Report

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## Celebration

### Date

1956-1959

### Medium

Oil on canvas

### Description

"Celebration" was painted by Mildred Scott Townsend, an early and mid-20th century Californian oil painter. Her late 1950s painting, Celebration, trumpets a much earlier impressionistic style, though perhaps showing a shift

towards the vibrancy of color and sense of movement of her eventual abstract works. But Townsend's abstract works take on entirely unique, otherworldly air, characteristic of nonrepresentational art. Scott was born in Oregon, Illinois on September 13, 1897, to a Methodist family. Daughter to a reverend, she and her family travelled across the Midwest to congregations in need. Her childhood was in many ways a pastoral one. As a child she breathed art, not even remembering a time she did not love practicing her brushwork. She studied painting in college and eventually attended the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1921 she married her husband and partner for the next 59 years, Elmer Scott Townsend, taking his last name. At a young age she had a close brush with death, contracting tuberculosis and forcing the couple to move to a drier climate. She survived the bout though and in 1935 the married couple moved to California which would be a home base for them for much of the rest of their lives. The late 1950s and '60s marked a shift away from the regionalist Californian style of the early postwar era. To change her own approach with the times, Townsend took a night school class at Pomona Junior College taught by Richards Ruben, a well-known Southern Californian abstract painter and teacher. One of his methods of instruction was to take a painting done by one of his students in their own style, and then add brushstrokes to make it increasingly abstract. When Townsend first started the course, Ruben characterized her work as being "too precious," feeling that it would gain some clarity through abstraction. She took the collaborative result home and feeling inspired immediately painted two more in that same style, thus creating her Medieval Man #1-#3. Happy with finished works, she then proceeded to continuously paint in that style until shortly before her passing.

### Dimensions

Overall: 20 x 24 in. (50.8 x 61 cm)