

Basic Detail Report



Coastline

Date

Early 20th century

Primary Maker

Nellie Gail Moulton

Medium

Oil on masonite

Description

This early 20th century oil painting depicting the California coast is titled "Coastline", by Nellie Gail Moulton, a founding California Plein Air painter. Born on December 8, 1878, in Irving, Kansas, Nellie Gail (1878-1973) spent much of her childhood and early adult life travelling, never staying in one place for too long; but after her family moved to Southern California she began to visit regularly. Her first impression of Orange County was not a strong one: "Who would want to live here?" But while working in Seattle as a schoolteacher in 1907, Nellie took a routine trip south to visit her family and met Lewis Moulton, another wealthy cattle rancher in Orange County, and the pair married less than a year later. Over time, Nellie Moulton fell in love with the locale, developing a love for painting among the lonely hills she had once critiqued so harshly. She became part in parcel to the Plein Air scene burgeoning in Laguna Beach and painted everything California had to offer, including countless seascapes such as "Coastline." Sometime after 1913, Nellie Moulton's desire to study the techniques of Plein Air painting had her cross paths with Anna Althea Hills (1882-1930), a more-established painter from Ohio who had just recently moved to the area. Anna Althea Hills had learned much about the technical elements of painting while attending art schools in the United States and Europe. It was this background met with her natural talent for landscape and marine-scapes that led her to achieve a degree of fame among Southern California Impressionists. Anna Hills became a mentor to Nellie Gail and cultivated her passion for artistry, teaching her much about working with oils. Their friendship led the two to found what is now the Laguna College of Art and Design. "Coastline" depicts a calming scene of the Pacific Ocean's waves crashing on a rocky Laguna-area shore at sunset. Perhaps Nellie Moulton's most notable attribute as a painter can be seen here in the technique she uses to paint the ocean. Nellie's ability to capture the vibrant pinks and yellow of sunset by using complementary colors for the air and sky, confirms her skill as an artist. By using slow-drying oil paints, the traditional medium for Plein Air paintings, artists like Nellie Moulton could capture the constant changing of natural light.

Dimensions

9 3/4 × 11 3/4 in. (24.8 × 29.8 cm) Framed: 15 × 17 × 1 3/8 in. (38.1 × 43.2 × 3.5 cm)