

# Basic Detail Report

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## Wayside Madonna

### Date

1939

### Primary Maker

Edith Catlin Phelps

### Medium

Oil on canvas

### Description

Wayside Madonna, an oil painting by Edith Catlin Phelps from 1939, is a depiction of a young woman draped in a purple shawl protectively holding her sleeping baby close. She rests on a bench alongside a dirt road that winds into distant mountains in a landscape recalling rural Mexico or Old California. The painting is a poignant document of the

Depression era of the 1930's, when many people were out of work and shelter. According to information on the reverse of the painting, it was most likely exhibited during a Madonna Festival held in Los Angeles during the Christmas season. Edith Catlin Phelps was born on April 16, 1874 in New York City, New York. As a young woman Phelps studied painting under William Merritt Chase and Charles Webster Hawthorne, and traveled to Paris to attend classes at the Académie Julian. She apparently lived a life of luxury, marrying the wealthy architect Stowe Phelps and residing in both Manhattan and Connecticut. She was herself a mother, adopting and raising a young girl and having a child of her own sometime around 1911. Phelps appears to have been happy living on the east coast until the Great Depression, when she and her family picked up and moved out to Santa Barbara in California. As a budding style of the early 1930s and major movement of the later decade, regionalist pieces such as this are portraits of American life, either populated or unpopulated, and in many cases illustrate the hardships that Americans faced during the Great Depression. Regionalism is also commonly referred to as American scene painting and was adopted by President Roosevelt and the government as the official art style of New Deal era projects. Much in the same way that muralism was to be a rallying flag for the arts of early 20th Century Mexico, regionalist painting was a vehicle for American people to take pride in their country.

### Dimensions

Framed: 39 3/4 × 33 3/4 × 2 in. (101 × 85.7 × 5.1 cm) 35 1/4 × 29 × 1 in. (89.5 × 73.7 × 2.5 cm)