

Helen Savier DuMond (1872 - 1968)

Coastal Landscape

oil on canvas

24" x 30"

Helen Savier DuMond was born in 1872 in Portland, Oregon, at a time when the city remained a frontier town, inhabited by a growing population of smugglers, brothel owners, laborers, and merchants all anxious to profit from the burgeoning timber trade. Her stepfather was a surgeon wealthy enough to send her east to Miss Porter's School in Connecticut to complete her education. Jeffrey Anderson writes: "Interested in art, Helen persuaded her mother to allow her to study at the Art Students League. She enrolled in the fall of 1893 and studied for six months there, returning home only at her mother's insistence" (1).

While studying at the League, Helen attended a painting class taught by popular instructor Frank Vincent DuMond (1865-1951). Charmed by the dashing and witty art instructor—and he equally impressed with her talent and worldliness—the two were married in 1895. The DuMonds left the League temporarily for France in the late 1890s. During their roughly six-year stay, Helen studied in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts with Raphael Collin (1850-1916) and Luc Olivier Merson (1846-1920). She exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1897 and again in 1898.

Frank DuMond's teaching schedule in both New York and Old Lyme afforded him greater exposure as an artist, but Helen DuMond's experience in Paris had established her as an ascendant talent in her own right. In addition to her Paris Salon showings, she also exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery in 1908 and at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1909 (2). She continued to paint plein-air landscapes, mostly in greens, of southeastern Connecticut, Nova Scotia, and Maine. She joined the National Art Club, the Art Workers Club, and the Catherine Wolfe Art Club, while exhibiting at the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy. Helen DuMond also taught privately. Her students included the noted Eleanor Rogers Onderdonk (1884-1964), who later leveraged her position as the curator of the Witte Museum in San Antonio to champion the visual arts in Texas (3).

Every August, Frank would take fishing and painting trips and Helen would often accompany him. Margaree, Nova Scotia was a favorite locale for the couple, and is the most likely setting for *Coastal Landscape*. The wooden fence in the foreground recedes diagonally toward the beach and creates a sweeping movement which lures the viewer in. The verdant cliffs meet the cool blue ocean at a graceful angle, and convey a sense of tranquility and reverie. The brushwork is controlled and rhythmic, and the painting owns a specific color key which lends a soothing unity to the work.

Provenance: From a private collection in Connecticut to the gallery.

Bibliography:

1. Jeffrey W. Anderson, "The Art and Life of Frank Vincent DuMond," in *The Harmony of Nature: the Art and Life of Frank Vincent DuMond* (Old Lyme: Florence Griswold Museum, 1990), 8 .
2. Helen DuMond Artist File, Courtesy of the Florence Griswold Museum.
3. The Handbook of Texas (www.tsha.utexas/handbook).