

From: "All Things Bright & Beautiful: California Impressionist
Paintings from the Irvine Museum"
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that appeared in the *Graphic*: "[Wendt] seems to have captured the spirit of 'The Silent Summer Sea.' I believe Mr. Wendt will one day paint marines which will win him world renown. There is a direct understanding for flowing elements, a fine interpretation of texture and glory in the composition."⁸⁶

Another of Wendt's finest paintings done along the coast, some miles north of Laguna Beach, is *Crystal Cove* (Joan Irvine Smith Fine Arts), painted in 1912, three years earlier than *The Silent Summer Sea*. The site also was the setting for Jack Wilkinson Smith's *Crystal Cove State Park* (plate 18), a ravishing juxtaposition of cliffs, rocks, ocean, and cloud-filled sky, all tinged with myriad touches of alternating prismatic colors. Despite the ruggedness of the scenery, the painting exudes a sense of peace and harmony, in an unspoiled natural paradise; indeed, California itself was deemed "An Artist's Paradise" by the earlier California painter-sculptor, Gutzon Borglum.⁸⁷ When Smith's picture was on view at Cannel and Chaffin Gallery in Los Angeles in the autumn of 1920, it was reproduced in *California Southland* with the caption: "Calm and serene, infinite in its power to solace, this picture speaks to us of Peace."⁸⁸ Smith too had grown up in Chicago, where he studied at the Art Institute and was influenced by Wendt. He was first in California in 1906, later becoming active in the California Art Club as well as the Laguna Beach Art

Association. In California, Smith specialized in two themes, both of which highlighted rocky masses—craggy sunlit coastal scenes and views in the High Sierra.⁸⁹

The artist who displayed singular devotion to the painting of the coast at Laguna was Frank Cuprien, whose *An Evening Symphony* (plate 19) is characteristic of his stock theme—a quiet panorama of waves rolling into shore. "Shore" itself is almost absent here, and the picture consists of two horizontal bands of water and sky, enlivened by the glint of sunlight on the water and a soft atmospheric haze in the distance. Cuprien's format is a very traditional one, depicting slow, incoming tides in opalescent colors, and recalls the eastern shore pictures painted by William Trost Richards in the 1870s and after, but Cuprien infused a gentle chromaticism into these compositions that allied them with Impressionism. Evening scenes appear to have held special attraction for the artist. Cuprien had studied in New York and in Philadelphia—where he had received criticism from Richards, an artist whom he greatly admired—before studying in Munich and Paris. After returning to the United States, he was in Florida and Texas before moving to California around 1912, living in Santa Monica, on Catalina Island, and in 1914 building a studio in Laguna Beach on a bluff off the Pacific Coast Highway, overlooking the ocean. A founder of that town's Art Association, Cuprien served as president in 1921.⁹⁰



PLATE 19
Frank Cuprien (1871–1948)
An Evening Symphony
Oil on canvas, 18 x 26 inches
Joan Irvine Smith Fine Arts, Inc.