

# The Prismatic Palette: Frank Vincent DuMond and His Students





Top: Frank Vincent DuMond (American, 1865–1951), *Self-Portrait*, 1907, graphite on paper, 17 ½" x 23". Collection of Francesca & Carl Mellin.

Right: Helen Savier DuMond (American, 1872–1968), *French Landscape*, 1897, oil on canvas, 18" x 25". Private collection.

**The Prismatic Palette: Frank Vincent DuMond and His Students** examines the art and teaching legacy of Frank Vincent DuMond (1865–1951). A key figure in American art and art education, DuMond is known for his landscapes and for the important role he played in the Lyme art colony in the early 20th century. Yet it is his long teaching career that has left the greatest impact on American art. DuMond taught at the Art Students League of New York for 59 years, instructing multiple generations of artists, including John Marin, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Everett Raymond Kinstler.

DuMond was a skilled painter and draftsman with great technical facility and a keen eye for color. Born in Rochester, New York, DuMond began his studies at the Art Students League of New York in 1884. He attended the *Académie Julian* in Paris from 1889 to 1891, studying with Gustave Boulanger, Jules-Joseph Lefebvre, and Benjamin Constant. Upon his return to the U.S., DuMond began teaching at the League in 1892 and married League art student Helen Savier in 1895. The couple honeymooned in Southern France and spent the next few years painting in France, submitting paintings to the Paris Salon for exhibition.



*Christ and the Fishermen* was exhibited at the 1891 Paris Salon and at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893. One of DuMond’s few extant large history paintings, it illustrates a miraculous haul of fish after an unsuccessful night of fishing in the Sea of Galilee. Here we see the artist’s skill at weaving a narrative, as the fishermen turn in surprise to see Christ approaching. While Helen Savier DuMond’s two French salon paintings were lost in a fire, several beautiful views of the French countryside show her painterly skill and her keen eye for composition.



A versatile and prolific artist, DuMond worked in a variety of styles, media, and genres. He produced illustrations for periodicals and books, and his narrative skill led to mural commissions, including two large-scale murals for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Celebrating the “pioneer spirit in America,” the murals showed a Westward procession, with allegorical figures and symbols of California’s abundance. A grid is visible through the paint, indicating that the study was scaled up for transfer to the final canvas, which was 12 feet high and 47 feet long.

Top: Frank Vincent DuMond (American, 1865–1951), *Christ and the Fishermen*, 1891, oil on canvas, 51" x 62". Collection of Douglas & Marcia Dumond.

Bottom: Frank Vincent DuMond (American, 1865–1951), *Arrival in the West - Mural Study*, ca. 1913, oil on canvas, 32" x 101". Collection of the Florence Griswold Museum; Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Harold Goodwin, 1984.21.6.



Frank Vincent DuMond taught summer *plein air* painting classes in a variety of scenic locales throughout his career. In 1902, the DuMonds arrived at the recently established art colony in Lyme, Connecticut. There Frank directed the Art Students League's new summer school, teaching 50-60 students. The DuMonds loved the region and soon formed friendships with many of the artists. Although the League moved the summer school to Woodstock, New York in 1906, the DuMonds remained in Lyme and bought a summer home on Grassy Hill. Inspired by the region's beauty, Frank painted many views of the meadows and vistas around the property. His approach to painting landscapes *en plein air* evolved over time as he absorbed and adapted Impressionist ideas and techniques, influenced in part by the work of his colleagues Willard Metcalf and Childe Hassam.

Top left: Frank Vincent DuMond (American, 1865–1951), *Autumn in Lyme*, 1925, oil on canvas, 28" x 30". Collection of N. Robert Cestone & Stephen V. DeLange.

Top right: Frank Vincent DuMond (American, 1865–1951), *Autumn, Grassy Hill*, undated, oil on panel, 12" x 16". Private collection.

## The Art Students League of New York

For 59 years Frank Vincent DuMond taught at the Art Students League of New York. During the academic year, he held two regular 3 ½-hour long classes six days a week in Studio 7, and he offered an open critique session on Sundays for current and former students. During the summers he led *plein air* painting trips to various locales, including Vermont and Nova Scotia.

In 1952, Stewart Klonis, longtime director of the League, declared: "No other man in the League's history had any comparable influence on the League's evolution." Klonis noted that DuMond was responsible for several key changes in teaching, ushering in co-ed classes and abolishing prerequisite studies that had limited students' access to live models. The fruits of his teaching can be seen in a fine drawing by John F. Carlson produced in DuMond's 1905 figure study class, capturing the pose of a live model.

This portrait of the young art student Georgia O'Keeffe was painted for William Merritt Chase's 1908 portraiture class at the League. Various sources list both Eugene Speicher and O'Keeffe as also being students of DuMond. Writing in 1952, Speicher noted: "[W]hat success I have since had, is largely due to [DuMond's] wise council and sympathetic understanding of my potentialities as an artist."



Top: DuMond teaching *plein air* painting in Pownal, Vermont, ca. 1945-49. Photo: W. Scott Mason.

Bottom: John F. Carlson (American, born Sweden, 1874–1945), *Figure Study*, 1905, graphite and charcoal on paper mounted on board, 20" x 26". Collection of the Art Students League of New York.

Left: Eugene Speicher (American, 1883–1962), *Portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1908, oil on canvas, 22 ½" x 17 ½". Collection of the Art Students League of New York.

## The Prismatic Palette

Frank Vincent DuMond taught his students a method of premixing color strings in stepped values, moving from light to the dark value by creating color ‘notes’ analogous to musical keys. This approach helped his students identify color value and saturation to better render the effects of light and shadow. The premixed colors could be transported in a paint box to save time and avoid having to mix them under fleeting light and weather conditions. DuMond likely first learned to premix colors in sequence during his studies in France, as it was an element of 19th century art practice. His own success with this method, combined with his long career as an instructor, enabled him to distill and present ideas about technique and color theory in ways that resonated deeply with his students.

Following DuMond’s death in 1951, his long-time student Frank Mason was elected by his peers to teach at the League. Mason had a remarkably long and productive career and passed on many of DuMond’s lessons to subsequent generations, teaching figurative art at the League until 2009. Other students of DuMond became influential teachers as well, including Arthur Maynard at the Ridgewood Art Institute in New Jersey, and Frances Weston Hoyt, who led *plein air* teaching sessions in Vermont and New Hampshire. Over time, various artists have adapted the prismatic palette to fit different needs, adjusting materials and paint strings to suit their preferences. A subsequent generation of artists is keeping the traditions of DuMond and Mason alive, including John Varriano and Thomas Torak, who both teach at the Art Students League.



Top: Frank Mason (American, 1921–2009), *Margaree River Valley, Nova Scotia*, 1952, oil on canvas, 24” x 30”. Estate of Frank Mason

Bottom: Ogden Pleissner (American, 1905–1983), Detail of *Winfield Scott Clime*, ca. 1930s, watercolor and gouache on paper, 14” x 21”. Private collection.

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DuMond’s boundless energy, honest straightforward sincerity and inspiring philosophy has been an impetus to literally thousands of students. His philosophy of teaching has never been one dealing with the mere manipulation of pigment on canvas, nor with keeping abreast of each new “ism” that appears on the horizon, but with timeless fundamental principles.

–Ogden Pleissner, *ASL 75th Anniversary Exhibition Catalogue*, March 1951



Left: The Prismatic Palette in use today at the Ridgewood Art Institute, Ridgewood, NJ. Photo: Rebecca Leer.

The logo consists of three vertical lines, each with a solid black circle centered on it, followed by a fourth vertical line without a circle.

**Lyman Allyn**  
ART MUSEUM

Cover: Frank Vincent DuMond (American, 1865–1951), Detail of *Approaching Storm*, ca. 1920, oil on canvas, 25 ½" x 35 ¼".  
Collection of Douglas & Marcia DuMond.