



NOTRE DAME, PARIS, c. 1893

Oil on canvas, 55¹/₄ x 66¹/₄ in. Crocker Art Museum, long-term loan from the California Department of Finance, conserved with funds provided by Gerald D. Gordon

to sketch, exhibiting the resulting paintings at his Berkeley studio in the fall. During this period, he contributed little to exhibitions in San Francisco.¹¹⁷ Floundering for direction, he also painted still lifes, but ultimately determined that he must find a new course. In November 1897 the *Chronicle* announced: “Deakin has embarked in a very important work, one which will occupy him largely for the rest of his life. He is going to undertake, under the patronage of some wealthy man, a series of works which will perpetuate for all time the California missions, fast falling into decay. He has already begun.”¹¹⁸

ANCIENT *and* HOLY THINGS

MISSION PAINTINGS

Deakin’s paintings of the twenty-one California missions would be recognized as his crowning achievement. Overall, he produced three complete series of mission paintings—two sets in oil, the other in watercolor—and many stand-alone compositions.¹¹⁹ The second set of oils was smaller than the first, painted for Deakin’s private gallery and meant as a safeguard against loss or damage to the originals.¹²⁰ He even designed original frames for the first set, incorporating Christian symbols such as carved thorns and nails and overlapping corners forming crosses. On the first painting in the series he transcribed again his favorite lines from Kingsley’s “Old and New”: “So fleet the works of men, back to the[ir] earth again; / Ancient and holy things fade like a dream.”

To realize the paintings, Deakin created more than 150 preparatory drawings ranging from simple sketches to highly finished works.¹²¹ When possible, he sketched each mission from the source, traveling to the sites by wagon. “Journey after



GRAPES AND ARCHITECTURE, 1896

Oil on canvas, 42¹/₈ x 28¹/₈ in. Crocker Art Museum, long-term loan from the California Department of Finance, conserved with funds provided by Louise and Victor Graf