

THE AURA OF NATURE: PAINTING BEYOND THE VIEW



Current Works by

Peter Adams and Daniel Pinkham

October 17 - November 15, 1998

Wanted W. Parkham
Peter Adams

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F O R E W O R D



The artwork of Peter Adams and Daniel Pinkham has been frequently exhibited at Joan Irvine Smith Fine Arts, Inc., and enjoys ever-growing patronage. This is the first time the works of both artists are being exhibited in tandem. One may wonder why two distinct individuals whose art is so stylistically different are being presented together. What is the element that unifies them? What do they share in common?

Dr. Patricia Trenton's insightful essay, The Aura of Nature: Painting Beyond the View, will attempt to bring forth the commonality and bond between these two artists of different backgrounds and temperament – close friends who are deeply imbued with spirit. Trenton has many publications to her credit, such as California Light: 1900 to 1930 and Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West, 1890-1945, and specializes in art history of the West.

It is with great pleasure that Joan Irvine Smith Fine Arts, Inc. presents this unique and exciting exhibition of artworks by two talented artists: Peter Adams and Daniel Pinkham.

Pam Ludwig
Director

THE AURA OF NATURE: PAINTING BEYOND THE VIEW



MOISTURE-LADEN AIR, overcast gray skies, in the stillness of nature, two plein-air artists set up their easels alongside the remaining strip of natural land and eucalyptus trees near Batiquitos Lagoon in Carlsbad, California. Artist Peter Adams reminisces to his fellow sojourner, Daniel Pinkham, that when he painted here twenty years ago “the landscape was covered with several thousand acres of eucalyptus trees and natural canyons. Today, it’s being urbanized with multi-family tract houses.” A landscape that once was wilderness has been decimated and flattened near a nature preserve called Batiquitos Lagoon (see cover image).

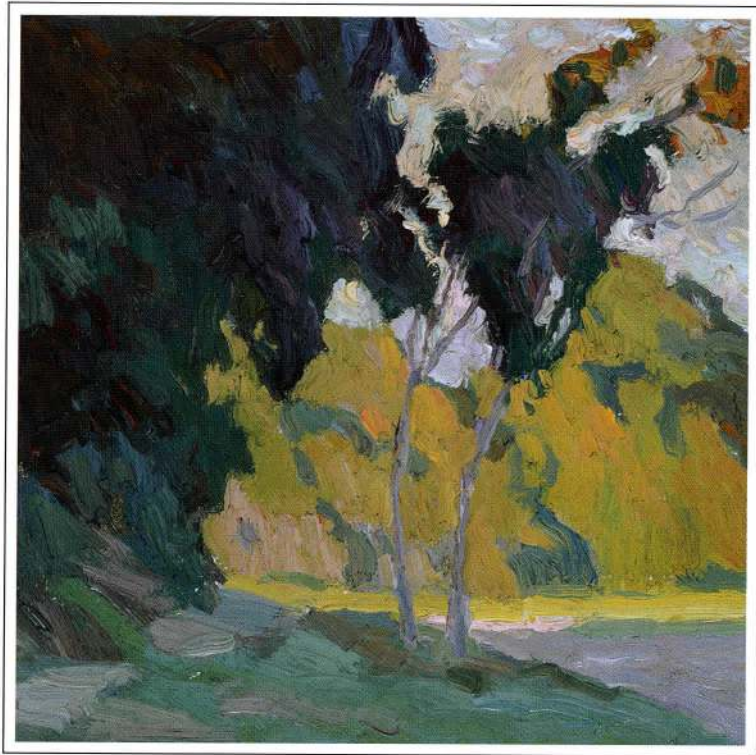
Carlsbad, in northern San Diego County, is the first leg of the two artists’ journey in search of pristine wilderness for their art. In the following months they will visit ranches deep in the dusty, hilly back country of San Juan Capistrano, then travel northward to the Palos Verdes coastline to paint the full moon hanging low over the shimmering waters of the Pacific. Peter paints en plein-air with his French easel and plastic jars of varied, pastel-like colored oils or crayons, usually accompanied by his two Australian Sheepdogs, Lava and Smoochie. Dan prefers to paint en plein-air with his Russian easel, using paint squeezed fresh from the tube. Each artist has his own working method.



LOOKING THROUGH THE EUCALYPTUS FOREST

16 x 20 INCHES O/B FIG.1

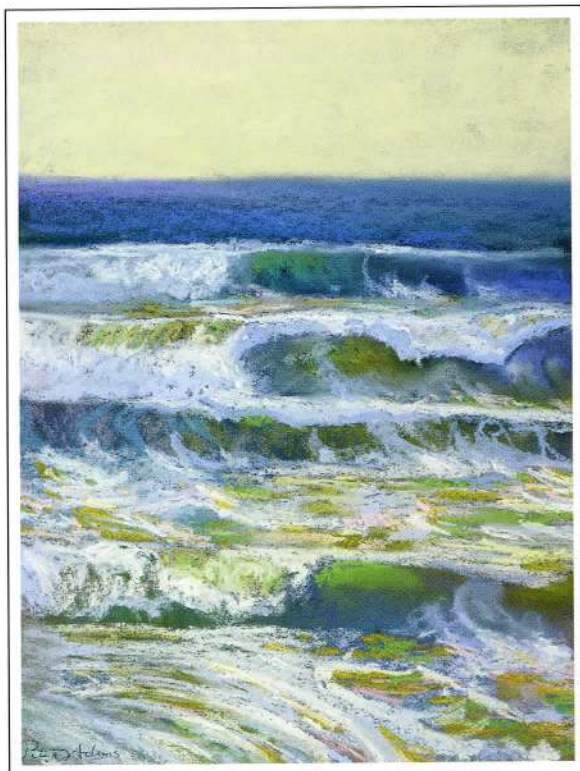
Peter will rapidly capture a blocked-in field painting on canvas and apply the finishing touches in the studio (Fig.1); Dan prefers returning to the site to rework or finish his painting in the field (Fig.2).



WALK OF PEACE, AFTERNOON EFFECT

8 x 8 INCHES O/B FIG.2

The two share a similar visionary philosophy and attitude toward nature, a reverent and intensely spiritual belief that nature's order derives from a divine source. Looking beyond reality, these artists see signs and tokens of divinity in nature. They believe these universal truths can be perceived by the common man through their art.



SURGING SURF

16 x 12 INCHES PASTEL FIG.5



HARMONY AT SUNSET

12 x 16 INCHES PASTEL FIG.6

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Although these kindred spirits share an intense attachment to nature, a common philosophy toward art, and a contemporary realist tradition, both cut distinctly individual stylistic paths. Peter's leanings toward Eastern philosophy and design evolved quite naturally from his early upbringing surrounded by Oriental objets d'art; extensive travel in Asia and the Far East; and the influence of his mentor, Theodore N. Lukits (1897-1992), who used Eastern objects as props for his students' compositions. It was at Lukits' Academy of Art that Adams developed his mastery in the use of pastels, creating small works with vibrant colors and animated shapes and forms (Figs.5 and Fig.6).



BE WITH GRACE

10 x 11 INCHES O/B FIG.9

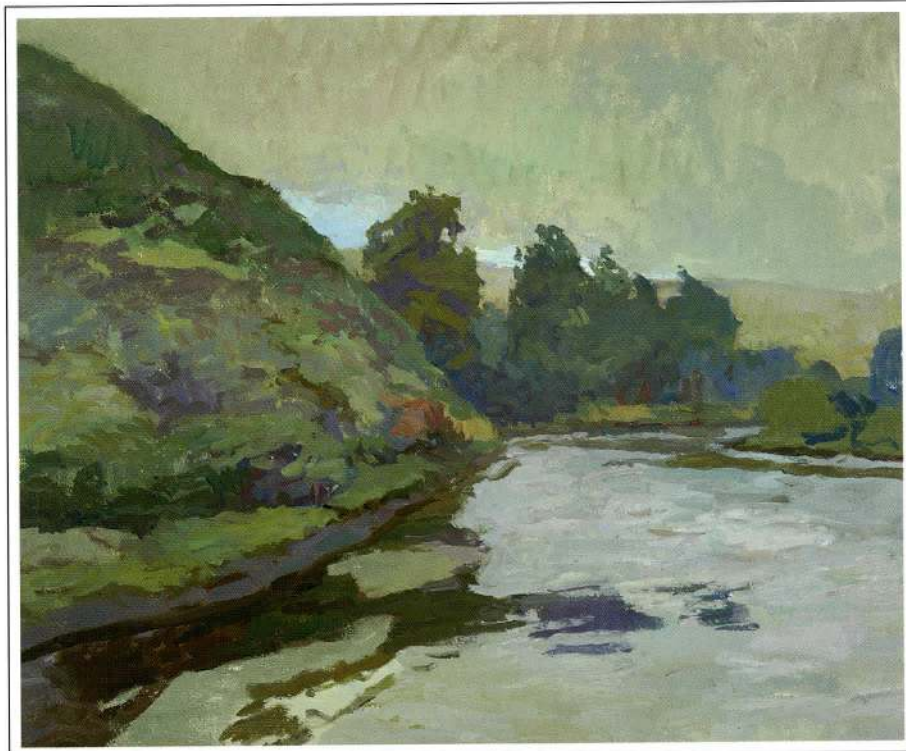
Be *With Grace* (Fig.9) demonstrates Dan Pinkham's remarkable ability to blend color tones with touches of paint across the surface – an effect that appears almost effortless. His five years of apprenticeship with the Russian masterpainter Sergei Bongart (1919-1985) imbued him with high aesthetic ideals, and extensive travel in Europe afforded him the opportunity to study the Old Masters. Today, Dan spends considerable time sketching and painting from a mobile studio – a converted truck equipped for painting – touring California in search of landscape vistas far removed from urbanization.



WALK OF PEACE, MID-DAY EFFECT

16 X 16 INCHES O/B FIG.10

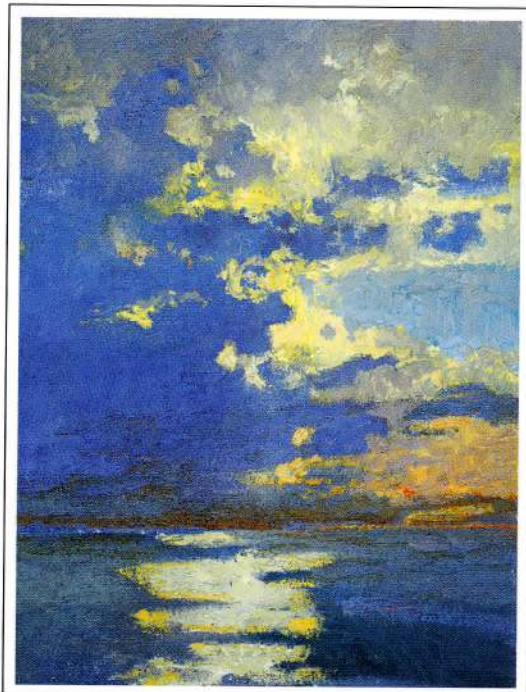
The artist is something of a paradox: one moment performing pranks to amuse his friends or regaling them with embellished stories, the next deeply immersed in studying scripture from the New Testament.⁵ Pinkham believes that the true use of art “is to help the artist develop his own spiritual nature and then present [it] through his work for all humanity to enjoy.” This, he feels, is reflected in every brushstroke and nuance of paint: “Painting in plein-air exposes and reinforces my intuitive belief in [a divine] order.”⁴



QUIET WATERS, LIFTING FOG

16 x 20 INCHES O/B FIG.11

A mysterious inner force seems to guide his hand; we are moved by the spirituality and lyricism of his pictures. In some ways, Dan's paintings hark back to the California Tonalist in their use of broad abstract shapes of color that are close in tonal value (Fig.10). They often exhibit a limited palette of soft, muted tones that underscore the solitary nature of the uninhabited areas the artist sought (Fig.11).



BEYOND THE VISIBLE 12 x 9 INCHES O/B FIG.12

Dan's work can also be likened to that of the historic Southern California plein-air painters (act.1900-1930), who shared similar ideas and goals. The ephemeral effects of sunsets and nocturnes over shimmering ocean waters in a number of Pinkham's paintings make them the most sensual and moving of all his works – each one resounds with a strong sense of spirituality (Fig.12).

While Adams' and Pinkham's techniques and styles differ, they share one trait in common: their spiritual feeling for nature. Both believe this spiritual force has been essential in shaping their art, and they both are somewhat pantheistic in their mystical identification of self with nature and the Creator.

Patricia Trenton, Ph.D.
Art Director/LAACO Ltd.
The Los Angeles Athletic Club Art Collection

B I O G R A P H I E S & N O T E S



PETER ADAMS

- Education: Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, California
Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, California
Lukits Academy of Fine Art, Los Angeles, California
- Professional Organizations: California Art Club – Current President and Signature Member
Oil Painters of America – Signature Member
Plein-Air Painters of America – Signature Member
Pastel Society of America – Signature Member

"I feel that my purpose as an artist is to record the beauty of nature in hopes of inspiring others to preserve what may very soon be lost."

DANIEL PINKHAM

- Education: Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, California
Sergei Bongart (Scholarship)
- Professional Organizations: California Art Club – Board Member and Signature Member
Oil Painters of America – Board Member and Signature Member

"There is honor and integrity to plein-air painting; it brings out a truth that is more extensive than our memory, imagination and photographs."

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1. A shared philosophy expressed by the artists over a weekend visit at the Adam's St. Malo home near Carlsbad, California in May, 1998.
 2. Peter quoted in Linda S. Price, "On Location with Peter Adams," in American Artist (July, 1997), 26.
 3. An excellent biography of Pinkham can be found in Elaine Adams, "Artist Profile: Daniel Pinkham the Spiritual Side of Art," California Art Club (April, 1997), 2-5.
 4. Dan Pinkham to author, letter, n.d., Palos Verdes, California.