

The Mystical Paintings of

PETER ADAMS



CARNEGIE
ART
MUSEUM

EXHIBITION LIST — CARNEGIE ART MUSEUM

March 7 through May 17, 1998

<i>Chinese Lohan and Incense</i> , 1992	20" × 28" oil on board
<i>Chinese Theatre</i> , <i>Carlsbad Caverns</i> , New Mexico, 1993	16" × 12" oil pastel on paper
<i>Design for a Monstrance</i> , 1977	30" × 24" graphite on paper
<i>Dovecote Tower before Midnight</i> , <i>Chateau de Balleroy</i> , France, 1997	16" × 20" oil on board
<i>Draped Veil; Study with Green and Red Lights</i> , 1976	28" × 22" oil on board
<i>First Morning Light</i> , 1996	30" × 40" oil on board
<i>Form and Void; Notre Dame Cathedral</i> , <i>Beaune</i> , France, 1997	20" × 16" oil on board
<i>Illumination; Chapel Interior at Balleroy</i> , France, 1997	16" × 12" oil on board
<i>Illumination of Saint Theresa</i> , <i>Mission San Juan Capistrano</i> , 1997	24" × 18" oil on board
<i>Lamppost; Paris Opera House Garnier</i> , 1997	16" × 12" oil on board
<i>Medusa at the Paris Opera House Garnier</i> , 1997	20" × 16" oil on board
<i>Monument to Victor Emmanuel II under Moonlight</i> (<i>Tomb of the Unknown Soldier</i>) Rome, Italy, 1997	16" × 20" oil on board
<i>Notre Dame Cathedral before Midnight</i> , <i>Paris</i> France, 1997	16" × 12" oil on board
<i>Palace of Fine Arts</i> , San Francisco, 1996	24" × 20" oil on board
<i>Reed Flute Caves</i> , Kwelin, People's Republic of China, 1981	16" × 12 1/2" gouache on paper
<i>Return of Sinbad</i> , 1996	24" × 48" oil on board
<i>Satyr Uplit</i> , 1977	24" × 20" oil on board
<i>Sculptor's Cemetery in Pietrasanta</i> , Italy, 1997	16" × 12" oil on board
<i>Sculpture with Laliue Glass</i> , 1976	24" × 18" oil on board
<i>Silk Route Still Life</i> , 1985	22 1/2" × 28" graphite on paper
<i>Sirens of the Sky</i> , 1982	36" × 48" oil on board
<i>St. Marks at Midnight</i> , Venice, Italy, 1994	16" × 16" oil on board
<i>Staircase at the Paris Opera House Garnier</i> , 1997	20" × 16" oil on board
<i>Sunken Treasure</i> , 1992	20" × 24" oil on canvas
<i>Sunset at Borghese Park</i> , <i>Rome</i> , Italy, 1994	12 1/2" × 16 1/2" pastel on paper
<i>Tibetan Lamasery; Jhokang Temple</i> , <i>Lhasa</i> , Tibet, 1987	36" × 48" oil on board
<i>Tranquility; Still Life in an Aquarium</i> , 1993	24" × 30" oil on board
<i>View From Aiguille Du Midi</i> , <i>Mont Blanc</i> , France, 1997	12 1/2" × 16 1/2" pastel on paper
<i>View From Our Room at the Palazzo Ravizza in Siena</i> , Italy, 1997	18" × 24" oil on board
<i>Waters of Oblivion</i> , 1997	22" × 28" oil on board

on cover:

Palace of Fine Arts,
San Francisco, 1996
24" × 20"
oil on board

PETER ADAMS

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS while visiting Peter Adams' studio, I have been treated to several tours through this remarkable artist's storage racks of past, present and "in-progress" paintings and pastels. While sorting through one brilliantly accomplished landscape image after another I would occasionally tip one forward to discover not a landscape, but a darkly mysterious altar scene or an enigmatic still life. Yet, before I had a chance to ask about their significance, the artist would hurriedly rush on to the next canvas. Such short glimpses of his unique and haunting works teased my mind and clung to my memory, for after all, my first introduction to Peter Adams was as a landscape artist. Clearly, there was more to Adams' *oeuvre* than a single genre.

In subsequent visits, I would come across other atypical paintings by Peter Adams. Luminous figurative works or nocturnal imaginings were stuck in dark corners and tucked away behind paintings of sunlit ravines and dawn-struck trees. Each time I attempted to draw Peter's attention to these works, he would casually pass over them, or gently put me off saying "that's just something I did for myself, I'm not



*Tranquility; Still Life in
an Aquarium, 1993*
24" x 30"
oil on board

interested in showing it." Naturally, his aversion to my viewing these paintings only stimulated my curiosity.

Finally, having heard Adams comment after a lecture in 1997, that he and fellow Californian artists had studied and were eager to paint other subject matter in addition to their



*Monument to Victor
Emmanuel II under
Moonlight (Tomb of the
Unknown Soldier),
Rome, Italy, 1997
16" x 20"
oil on board*

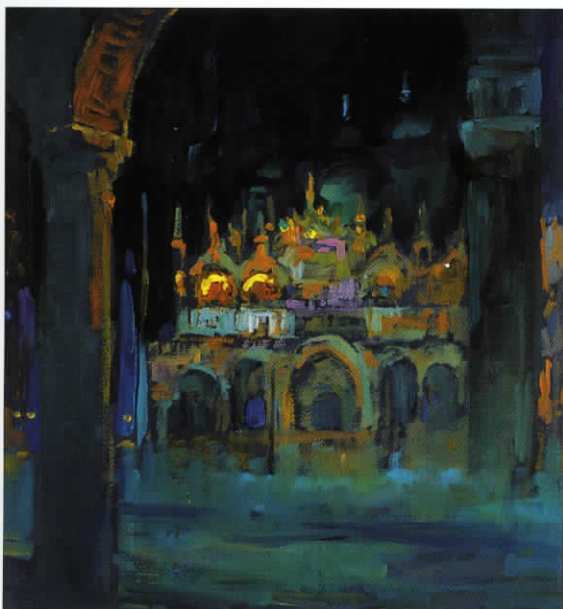
landscapes, I realized the time was right. At last, the artist acknowledged that he had a body of work influenced by the world of mystery and fables that verged on the spiritual, even the "mystical." After some careful coaxing,

I convinced Peter that these personal works, which he has kept private during his twenty-year career, would interest the public and should be shared to reveal his full artistic scope.

Generally recognized for his poetic and ethereal handling of landscapes and for his sensitive on-location paintings of the disappearing cultures of Asia, it is really not surprising that Adams would design a meditative atmosphere into his other genre paintings. His mystical paintings reveal an ephemeral, dreamlike quality which Adams believes is inherent to the natural world, yet rarely perceived. Although this quality of the sublime is apparent in many of his landscape paintings, it is allowed to be more evident in the works Adams created purely for his own pleasure. Symbolistic and provocative figures appear in his views of religious and secular architecture and sculpture. These works represent Adams' most intimate



above: *Palo Alto Mist*, 1996
24" × 30" oil on board

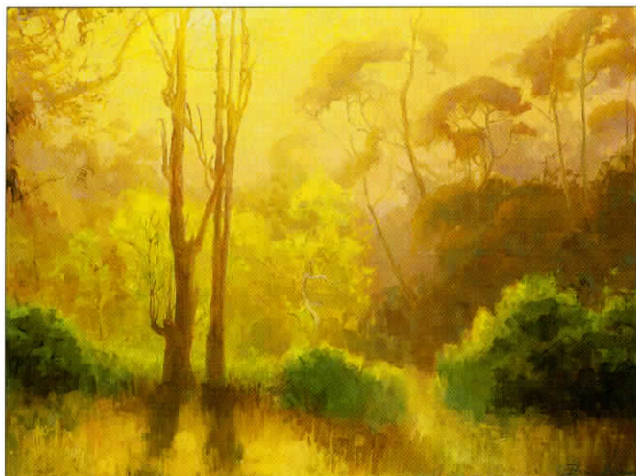


left: *St. Marks at Midnight*,
Venice, Italy, 1994
16" × 16" oil on board

reflections on life and fantasy. They are, in fact, created as a means of psychological release, where the artist permits his whole imagination to have free reign.

To achieve a mystical atmosphere revealing the sublime, Adams prefers working in the exotic tonal keys ranging from a very low value to very high, as opposed to the ordinary

middle range. An example of his using a very low key is the painting, *Tibetan Lamasery*, developed during one of his trips to Asia. In this painting Adams captures the incense-filled altar



First Morning Light,
1996
30" x 40"
oil on board

scene in the famous Buddhist monastery of the *Jokhang Temple* in Lhasa, Tibet. Here, objects blend into the smoke and disappear into darkness. Conversely, *First Morning Light*, is painted in a very high key. This painting conveys the experience of waking up to an almost overpowering light on a glaring morning while camping in the wilderness. Here, objects blur into the light, and nothing is clearly delineated. In both examples form and light fuse together blurring worldly substance.

It is apparent that Adams' unique sense of design and color harmonies is greatly influenced by his love for the late nineteenth century European works of the *Symbolists* and *Art Nouveau* painters. He studied with Theodore N. Lukits (1897-1992) for seven years from 1970 to 1977, during

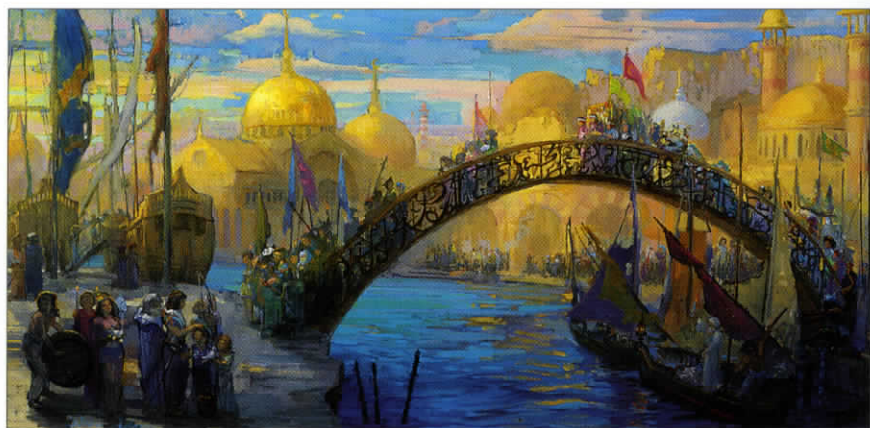


left: *Illumination of Saint Theresa;*
Mission San Juan Capistrano, 1997
 24" \times 18" oil on board

below: *Tibetan Lamasery,*
Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet, 1989
 36" \times 48" oil on board



which time he gained an appreciation for a wide array of academic and stylistic artists of the late nineteenth century. Lukits' earliest teacher and one of his greatest influences was one of the foremost artists of the *Art Nouveau* movement, Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939).

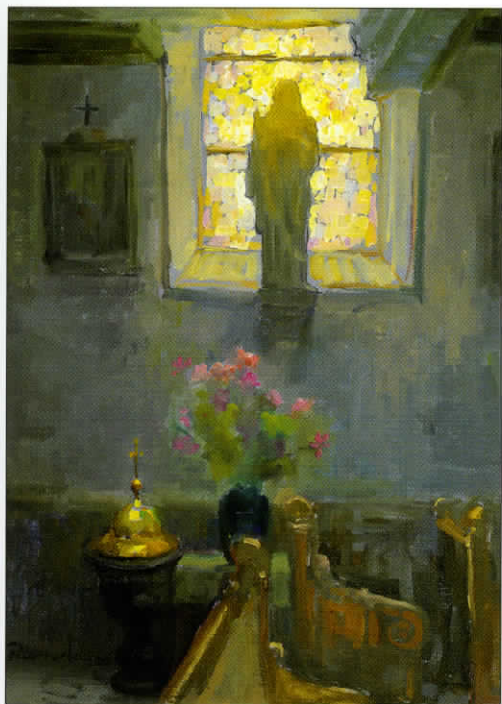


The Return of Sinbad,
1996
24" x 48"
oil on board

Under Lukits' tutelage, Adams diligently studied the works of many art movements of the later part of the nineteenth century including: *Neoclassicism*, *Naturalism*, *Impressionism* and *Symbolism*. But it was *Symbolism* that most appealed to him, as its style more closely suggests the spiritual world. Actually, it is Peter's belief that many spiritual revelations are not crystal clear, but are often an enigma obscured in a blurry haze. It is this sense of obscurity that intrigues the viewer and presents us in his works with an ethereal beauty of multiple layers of interpretation.

Suzanne Bellah

Director
Carnegie Art Museum
Oxnard, California



left: *Illumination; Chapel Interior*,
Balleroy, France, 1997
16" × 12" oil on board

below: *Sunset at Borghese Park*,
Rome, Italy, 1994
12 1/2" × 16 1/2" pastel on paper



PETER ADAMS

Born in Los Angeles, California — August 27, 1950

PETER ADAMS received his training at the *Art Center College of Design*, the *Otis Art Institute*, and the *Instituto de Bellas Artes*, San Miguel de Allende. However, it was not until he enrolled at the *Lukits Academy of Fine Arts* in Los Angeles that he finally found the traditional artistic philosophies he so admired. At the Academy, Adams spent seven years in diligent formal training, eventually becoming the personal apprentice to the renowned mural, landscape and portrait painter, Theodore N. Lukits (1897–1992).

In 1980 Adams was the first American artist to travel and paint unescorted through the People's Republic of China. Peter Adams' fascination for the Orient gained him great acclaim when, in 1987, he was the only American artist to

travel and paint with the *Moujahideen* rebels in Soviet occupied Afghanistan.

Since 1993, Adams has been President of the historic California Art Club (founded in 1909), and has been instrumental in positioning this professional art organization as a leader in the current national traditional art movement.

*Form and Void;
Interior of
Notre Dame Cathedral,
Beaune, France, 1997
20" × 16"
oil on board*



☞ SPECIAL DISTINCTIONS

President (since 1993) and Signature Member of the
California Art Club, est. 1909
Signature Member of the Pastel Society of America
Signature Member of the Oil Painters of America
Signature Member of the Plein Air Painters of America
Associate Guild Member, Honorary Emeritus of the
American Society of Classical Realism
Board of Trustees Member, Pacific Asia Museum,
Pasadena, California
Advisory Board of Directors Member,
Academy of Art College, San Francisco, California
Recipient of the 1997 Pasadena Arts Council's Gold Crown
Award for Visual Art
Recipient of the 1994 California Discovery Award, Gold Medal

☞ FEATURE ARTICLES IN NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

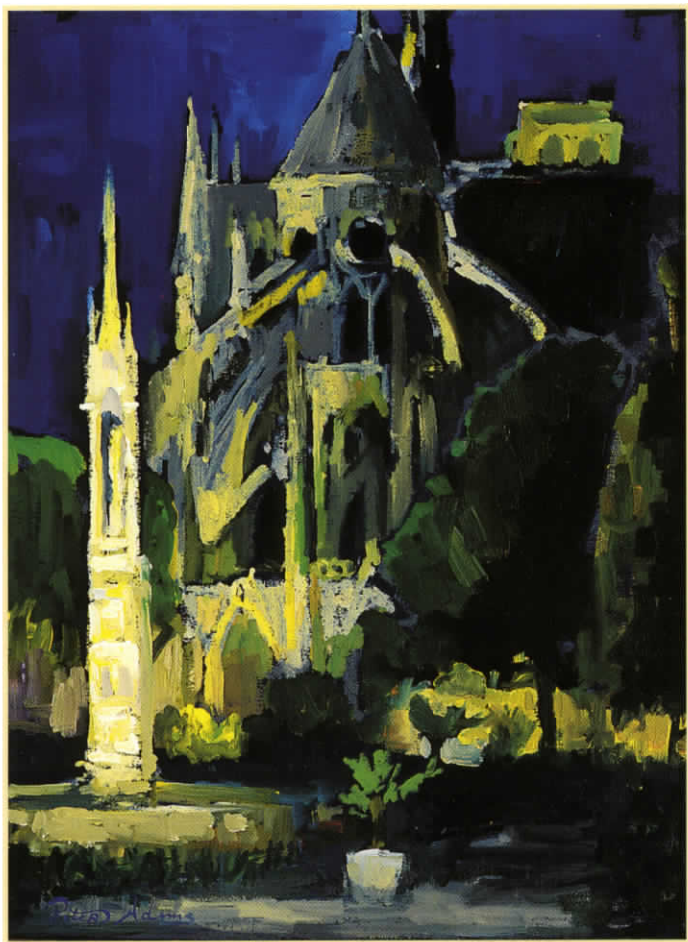
Art-Talk (August/September 1997)
"Peter Adams: Carrying on a Golden Tradition", by Danny Medina
American Artist Magazine (July 1997)
"On Location with Peter Adams", by Linda S. Price
Southwest Art Magazine (May 1996)
"Peter Adams: Eastern Exposure", by Peter Adams

☞ BOOK REFERENCES

Leading the West: One Hundred Contemporary Painters and Sculptors, by
Donald J. Haggerty; published by Northland Publishing, 1997
Impressions of California: Early Currents in Art 1850-1930
Essay on the California Art Club, by Nancy Dustin Wall Moure;
Published by The Irvine Museum, 1996
Who's Who of American Art; listing.

☞ ART GALLERY REPRESENTATIONS

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Notre Dame Cathedral Before Midnight, Paris, France, 1997
16" x 12" oil on board