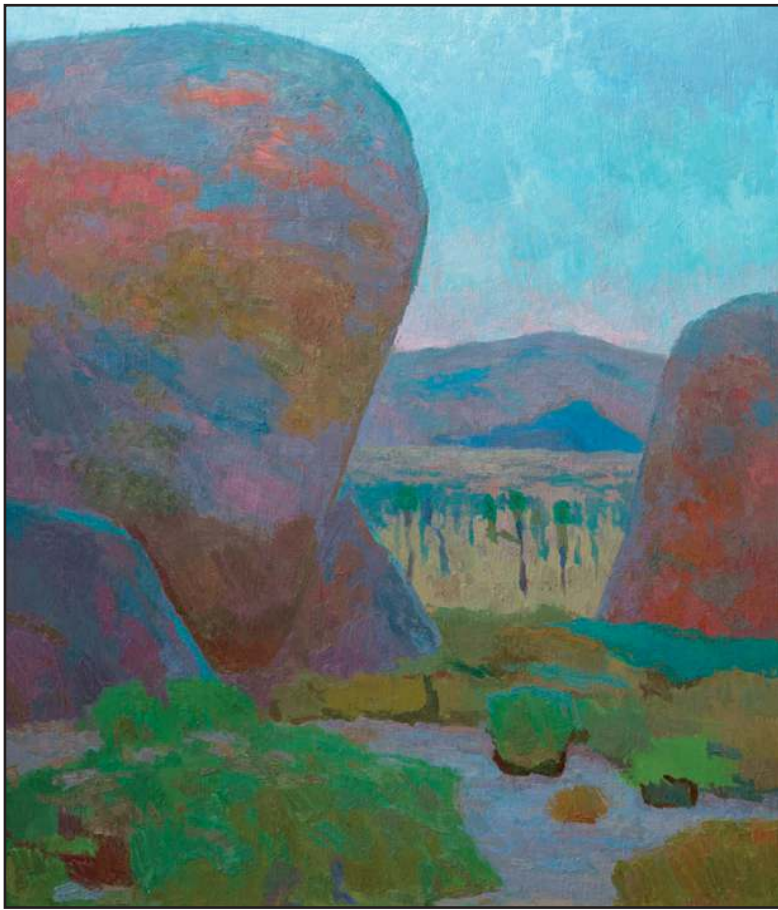


ART IN FOCUS



Near And Far Joshua Tree by Eric Merrill

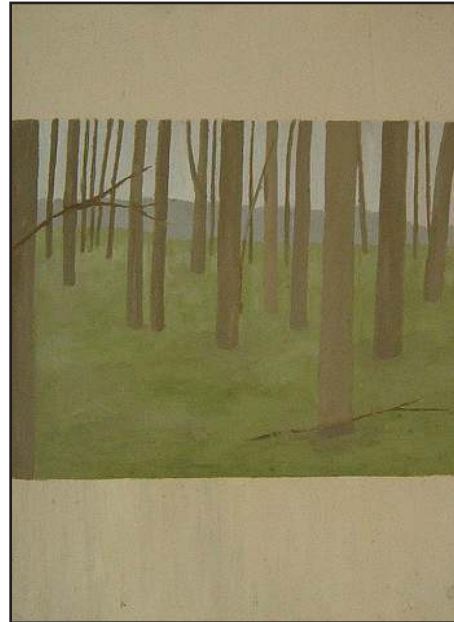
Artists Hit the Highlands

Unique Program Brings International Talent

BY SANDRA HALE SCHULMAN

Joshua Tree, CA - The Joshua Tree Highlands Artist Residency hosted an informal gathering at the home of the sponsors last Saturday for the community to meet this year's chosen artists. The program offers artists a house in which to live and work for July and August to create a body of work. The program culminates with a group show in September.

Frederick Fulmer and James Berg, the generous owners of the homes, which are rented out as private desert vacation getaways the rest of the year, solely fund the residency program. Each of the Highland homes has five acres and are located right up against Joshua Tree National Park.



"We love art and want to share this spectacular area with creative young artists from all over the world," says Berg.

The park is one of the most beautiful environments in the country and the unique beauty and quiet is an ideal place to create. The residency is open to artists worldwide working in all media.

Three of the six 2009 artists were introduced at the event; two painters and a writer.

A landscape painter from Rosemead, California,

Eric Merrell teaches at the Los Angeles Academy of Figurative Art in Van Nuys. He has traveled extensively throughout the US and Europe, painting and exhibiting in various cities. An amazingly fast painter, Merrell aims to capture the ever-changing light, often creating as many as five paintings a day.

Renata De Bonis from Sao Paulo, Brazil creates sweetly muted palette paintings, usually of landscapes and places that "I connect with and resonate with me," she says. De Bonis has already completed some lovely, stark works of rock formations reminiscent of Georgia O'Keefe.

Maria De Los Angeles Esteves—Maria or "Cuca" as she is called, was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina and now lives in Altadena, California. She graduated from the Conservatorio de Musica de San Martin, Buenos Aires with a degree in Music Education. Later she went to Paris to study electro-acoustic music, orchestration, composition and film composition. She read a harrowing short story about a desperate act of survival that turns deadly.

The other participating artists are Marcia Freedman, Painter, Edward Bok Lee, Writer and Fernando Sanchez who creates Video/Conceptual works. ■



*Above, CENA by Renata DeBonis
Left, Old Kind of Blues, oil by Renata De Bonis*