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Focus on Traditional Fine Art

The California Art Club's 104th annual Gold Medal Juried Exhibition displays top-quality works from California and beyond.

Before Elaine Adams became executive director of the California Art Club in 1993, and her husband, painter **Peter Adams**, became president the same year, the club that was founded in 1909 held its annual awards exhibitions in home savings and loan business lobbies. Nearly all of the 70 members, mainly octogenarians, Elaine recounts, were guaranteed to show work, with prizes up to honorable mentions in each category—virtually everyone left with a prize.

Today, California Art Club has more than 3,000 members, and its *Gold Medal Juried Exhibition* is regarded as one of the country's top showcases of contemporary traditional fine painting and sculpture. For this year's 104th annual exhibition at the USC Fisher Museum of Art, more than 700 artists entered to show. The free exhibition will feature 200 works from about 120 top artists in California and beyond, as the club includes some out-of-state members in its pursuit of advancing a national voice in traditional art internationally.

Elaine, who, along with Peter, still holds that same position 22 years later, says she is continually impressed with how much more innovative and confident participating artists become every year. Artwork is chosen by a panel of more than a dozen art professionals, including museum curators, museum directors and top signature artists from the club, who select based on high-quality technical skill and meaningful, poetic messages.

"We want people to come to the show and feel like they're getting an art education just by looking," Elaine says. "If people are thinking of collecting traditional, representational art, this is the place to go."

The success of the growth of the event is evident to San Bernardino, California-based artist **John Budicin**, who has two works in the exhibition in his 20th year participating, including the Coachella Valley-inspired *Paint Fast*. A previous winner for best landscape painting, Budicin calls the event a major exhibition with some of the best artists in the country.

"In the past 20 years, California Art Club,



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- 1
Kathleen Dunphy,
Chores, oil, 6 x 8"
- 2
Bryan Mark Taylor,
Bay Evening Light, oil,
24 x 30"
- 3
John Budicin, *Paint Fast*,
oil, 21 x 30"
- 4
Peter Adams, 'Mary.'—
Moment of Recognition,
oil on panel, 48 x 36"
- 5
Craig Nelson, *Central
Park Serenade*, oil,
24 x 18"

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VIDEO

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through the hard work and dedication of Peter and Elaine Adams, has grown from an almost forgotten organization to a very prestigious one," Budicin says.

Craig Nelson, a member of the California Art Club for the past 20 years, agrees the growth of the exhibition has been exponential and now includes some of the finest artwork found nationally. The Santa Rosa, California-based artist says the high-quality work at the event encourages him to strive to produce better work, even after winning several awards for his figurative pieces throughout the years. He adds the opportunity to converse with other artists is a reason for his continued participation in the exhibition throughout his club membership.

"The exchange of ideas and to find out what other people are doing is important for artists, and it maybe opens up an avenue for them they haven't thought of," Nelson says. "In business, there is networking, and this is kind of like networking, except we have the added luxury of looking at mind-boggling art on top of it."

A fellow veteran artist, who marks her 10th year participating in the *Gold Medal Juried Exhibition* this year, is **Kathleen Dunphy**. Dunphy will have two pieces in the show and says she always enjoys the camaraderie of the artists who participate and the chance to get to know collectors.

"In my experience, the artists have all been very approachable and willing to talk about their individual paintings and their overall methods," Dunphy says. "That is something that is very rare to find, and that collectors really seem to appreciate."

One of the oil works Dunphy will be exhibiting is *Chores*, painted on location a few hundred feet from her northern California studio at her chicken coop. Dunphy says she often sits by the coop and sketches the chickens as they interact with each other, and the light on the side of the coop on a summer afternoon served as inspiration for her piece.

Sunshine and bright skies are part of what makes California art stand out, Elaine says. She adds the light, sense of freedom and abundance of color make Californian art distinctive, and viewers will see both beautiful settings in works, as well as grittier California scenes, such as **William Wray's** aptly titled *Seven Eleven*, depicting a spot in Hollywood. Wray, who has participated in the *Gold Medal Juried Exhibition* for about seven years, says he chooses his contemporary subjects in hopes they cross over to traditional collectors.

"I like that my subjects are challenging for the average collector, urban subjects that are not pretty, like scenes in nature," Wray says. "I'm hoping the collector can see that making a mundane urban subject beautiful is unique."





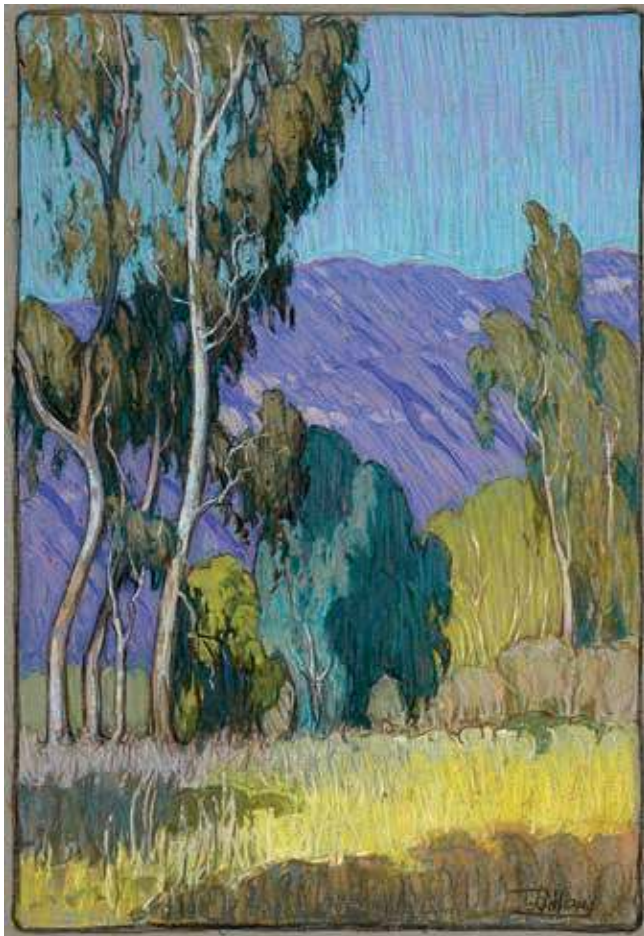
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6
William Wray,
Seven Eleven, oil,
34 x 32"

7
John Cosby,
Golden Cliffs,
oil on linen,
24 x 30"

8
Jesse Powell,
Fresh Snow,
Truckee, oil on
linen, 24 x 36"

9
Tim Solliday,
California Spring
Day, pastel,
24 x 16"



9

Besides the art exhibition, the event includes a gala preview reception for artists Saturday, March 28, which features the awards ceremony where Best of Show honors are announced. Prizes include two Gold Medal awards for best painting and best sculpture, selected by exhibiting artists voting for works besides their own. Other honors include awards named after significant members of the club, such as the Dean Cornwell Award for Best Multi-Figure Painting and Franz Bischoff Award for Best Still Life.

There will also be a sculpting demonstration with Southern California artist **Christopher Slatoff** on Sunday, March 29, as well as a walking tour of sculpture on the University of Southern California campus Saturday, April 11.

Elaine says the goals of the California Art Club are to make art better, to educate the public and to support the artists. While sales are not the main focus of the 104th annual *Gold Medal Juried Exhibition*, Elaine says the event is ideal for both experienced and beginner collectors.

"It really is a great opportunity to invest in really great works of art for really great prices," Elaine says. "These are the artists who have built the credibility themselves to be the voice we need out there, so these are the ones we need to be focusing on. These are the ones who are called out to be the leaders in the traditional field. Collectors need to support these artists who are really connecting to our world today." ●