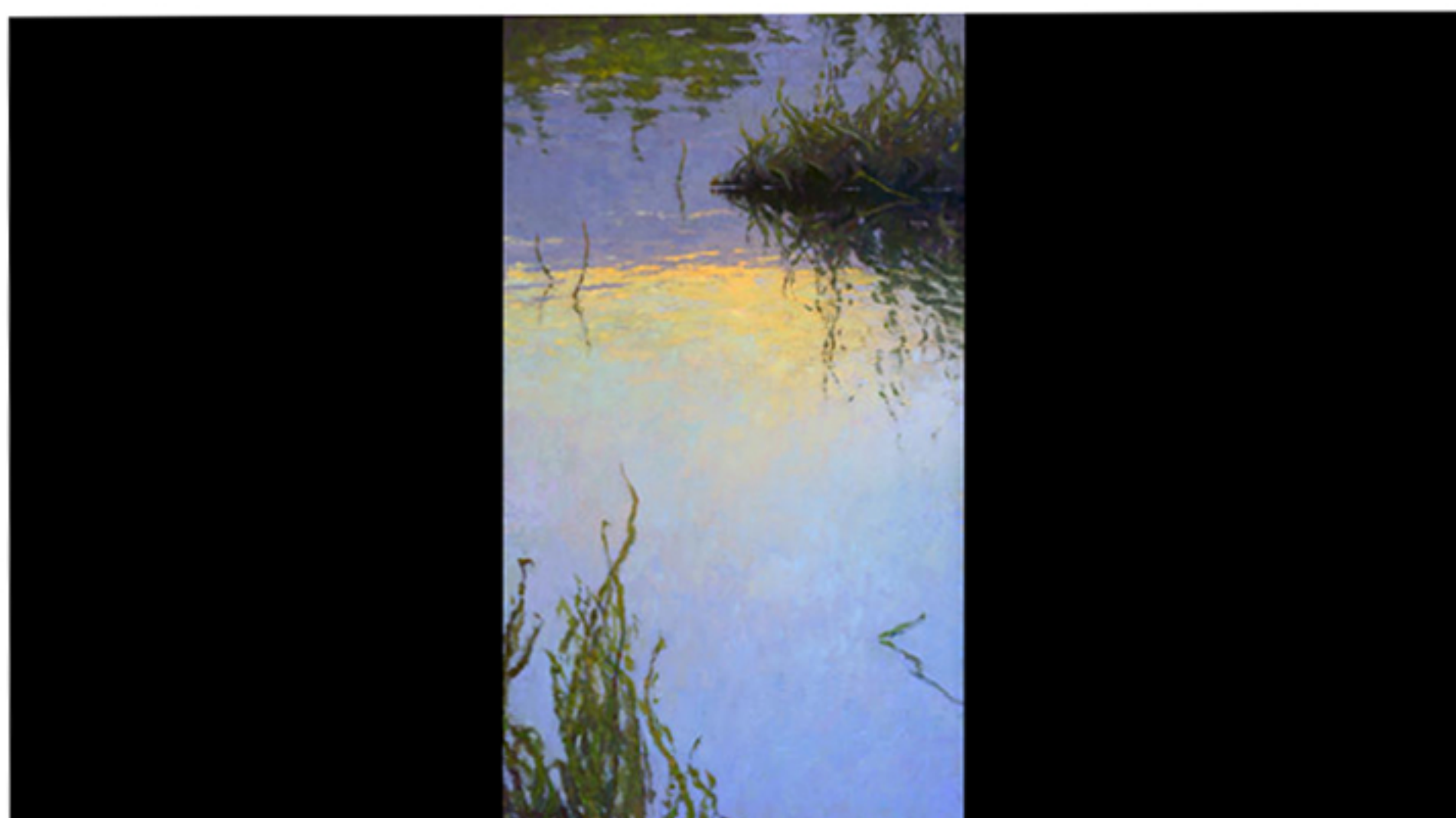


Personal touches reflect female artists' 'Intuition'



"In Repose" by Jennifer Moses is part of "Intuition: A Focus on Women Artists" at American Legacy Fine Arts Gallery in Pasadena through May 28. (Courtesy of the American Legacy Fine Arts Gallery)

By **Kirk Silsbee**

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A contemporary exhibit by a group of women artists brings to mind all manner of installations, objects and videos that traffic in personal disclosure, laceration, exhibitionism and indictment. Not so at the new show at the American Legacy Fine Arts Gallery, "Intuition: A Focus on Women Artists." These women look outward through their work yet by doing so define their inner selves.

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It's a small installation in Pasadena of about 30 pieces by painters Jean LeGassick, Jennifer Moses, Teresa Oaxaca and Amy Sidrane, and sculptor Alicia Ponzio. Painted landscapes dominate though Oaxaca and Ponzio engage the figure in their respective media. Viewings at the intimate ALFA Gallery are arranged by appointment only.

The traditional subject matter has been a staple of western art for centuries, but the personal touches seen in "Intuition" both affirm their relevance and point to new directions.

Ojai resident Jennifer Moses paints with a deliberation that quietly envelopes the viewer. Her "In Repose" catches the sun's shimmer on a patch of standing water, which breathes luminously. The impastoed surfaces can only be experienced in the flesh and are built from the inside out — the old-fashioned way.

By contrast, 25-year old Teresa Oaxaca's "Carousel" is an Expressionist scene of a garishly zaftig figure amid a bevy of antique dolls. It has an immediacy and energy not seen by the other work in the show. Her voluptuous excesses — in subject matter, plentiful flesh and effusive decoration — might be called Rococo Moderne.

Oaxaca's avoirdupois and Ponzio's graceful figure and thoughtful bust sculptures set them apart from the

painters in the show. But is there anything about the work that is intrinsically feminine? "Maybe Teresa's," Sidrane cautiously opines. The Redondo Beach resident further clarifies: "I always wanted my work to be so that you couldn't tell if it was painted by a man or a woman."

A pre-reception artist talk by LeGassick focused on her personal methods for painting in nature, and revealed the spirit of a pioneer woman. The 66-year-old Art Center grad drives her Toyota Tacoma into remote areas. She often hikes into forbidding terrain and tries to capture an interesting scene within the space of a few hours.

If the view is spectacular enough, LeGassick will dive into a painting, without having had her morning coffee. "I can do that for a couple of hours," she cautions, "but anything more than that I can get into real trouble."

Her "First Light Wheeler Crest" is a study of cool, shadowed foreground brush and hills warmed by the dawn's first light. Because of the rapidly changing light, LeGassick blocked in the underpainting in about an hour. "I knew I had to lock it in fast," she relates.

As a former Californian, she has painted the coastline but notes the differences in light and color. "I grew up in Glendale," LeGassick says, "and living in Nevada, I really miss the chaparral around the hills. They hold so much color." She continues: "Southern California has so much moisture in the air and that softens the light. I live in the desert where the air is bone-dry. The surfaces look harder and the color can be more extreme."

LeGassick gave a short, humorous treatise of her encounters with animals: "Never run from bears and mountain lions," she warns, "it brings out the predator instinct in them and you start to look like a meal. Snakes have never bothered me; chipmunks drive me crazy."

The adventurism pays off in the authenticity of LeGassick's plein air painting. "To do this kind of work you have to combat the elements yet step into the creative mode," she states. "I'm just trying to bring a little bit of nature to our world."

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What: "Intuition: A Focus on Women Artists"

Where: American Legacy Fine Arts Gallery, 949 Linda Vista Dr., Pasadena

When: Through May 28. Tuesday through Saturday, by appointment only

More info: (626) 577-7733, info@americanlegacyfinearts.com

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KIRK SILSBEE writes about jazz and culture for Marquee.