

# Highlighting the Younger Set at the Gold Medal

by Molly Siple

**T**HIS YEAR'S **GOLD MEDAL EXHIBITION** INCLUDES ITS SHARE OF NOT-TO-BE-MISSED EMERGING artists. Some are well into their professional careers while others are in the first stages, invited into the **California Art Club** as Mentor Program members, a special category created for talented artists under 35 years of age. Mentor Program members are given the invaluable opportunity to study with the Club's esteemed Signature Artists and also show their work at CAC exhibitions such as this one. These painters bring fresh energy to today's world of representational art, staying true to traditional values while also exploring contemporary sensibilities. Here are six artists to watch for:

**TERESA OAXACA** is a highly accomplished representational artist and portraitist who studied with virtually all of the important sources of classicist training available today—the **Florence Academy of Art**, and the Angel Academy of Art in Florence, plus a stint with the legendary Norwegian figurative artist **Odd Nerdrum**. Oaxaca's current work offers the viewer a lush fantasy world of unusual pairings of subject matter in which human and still-life elements mix. Imagine a comely young lass swathed in Victorian dress surrounded by story-telling props such as tea cups, roses, cherubic dolls, and a painted carnival mask. Her award-winning work has been exhibited by such prestigious venues as the **American Museum of the Cowboy**, the former **Corcoran Gallery of Art**, and the **Museu Europeu D'Art Modern** in Barcelona. She is a Mentor Program Member of the CAC and currently lives in Washington D.C.

**HSIN-YAO TSENG** is a California Art Club Mentor Program Member who has already produced an impressive body of work. Born in Taiwan and educated at the **Academy of Art**

**University**, San Francisco, during his brief career to date, Tseng has been included in a huge number of exhibits and received many prestigious awards. Among his many honours, **The Art Renewal Center** declared him an ARC Living Master in 2014. His remarkably proficient signature style features expressive brushwork and an assured hand, whether the subject is figurative, portrait, cityscape, still life, landscape, or a story-telling interior. A youthful curiosity and energy leads him to experiment with various traditional genres, but he is also very much an artist of today, producing canvases that often have an edgy, contemporary complexity.

**ELIZABETH MCGHEE** is an Artist Member of the California Art Club and a native of southern California, with the good fortune of being from a family of artists who came originally from Scotland and Sri Lanka. McGhee is a figurative painter who trained in the Classical Realist tradition, graduating *cum laude* from the **Laguna College of Art and Design** in 2009. Like Oaxaca, McGhee too adopts the vocabulary of still life to invent unusual imagery, turning to words to inspire

her amusing visual puns...*Laughing Stock* (a little toy clown on a cart rides into an overturned soup pot)...and unexpected combinations...*Cheap Skate* (a little yellow chick sits on top of a metal roller skate). As McGhee explains, "I often turn to humour to address serious or controversial subjects. With my paintings of toys I am examining how symbols are interpreted through the lens of cultural dogma." McGhee is also in the process of painting a fascinating series of portraits of women that offer modern interpretations of ancient Greek myths.



Hsin-Yao Tseng  
*Guarding Sorolla*  
Oil 30" × 30"

Teresa Oaxaca  
*The Allegory of Tea*  
Oil on canvas 38" × 26"

**CANDACE CHONAVEC**, a Mentor Program Member of the California Art Club, is another emerging artist whose work includes portrayals of contemporary women. She places her well-rendered figures in fantasy settings, showing these women as mothers and nurturers. Chonavec is also an accomplished plein air painter, her work outstanding for its bold design and rich colour. This past year, a painting by Chonavec was awarded First Place at the Los Angeles Country Fair Plein Air Painting Competition. She graduated in 2008 with a BFA, *cum laude*, from the **Laguna College of Art and Design** and is currently completing a Master of Fine Arts degree at **Cal State University Fullerton**.



Elizabeth McGhee  
*Eileithya*  
Oil 12" × 24"

**CHRISTOPHER COOK** is another young Mentor Program Member of the California Art Club, self-described as a colourist and Contemporary Impressionist. Early on he decided his formal art training would be primarily in the form of apprenticeship, in particular with two noted practitioners, **Stephan Baumann**, landscape and wildlife artist and host of the PBS television series "The Grand View" that focused on painting America's National Parks, and CAC Signature Artist Member **David Gallup**. For three years Cook worked intensively at Gallup's side, gaining a contemporary aesthetic. "As a plein air painter," says Cook, "the experience I have on location is paramount, with the painting coming naturally as a result. Before beginning to paint I make sure to first immerse myself in the setting in order to convey a sincere personal observation, which is, consequently, universal."

With such talented young painters taking their place among the fine representational artists of today, both new and seasoned art collectors can look forward to following their careers and adding the exceptional works of these individuals to their collections. 📍



Candice Chovanec  
*Front Man*  
Oil 24" × 30"



Christopher L. Cook  
*Silent Messenger*  
Oil 48" × 43"