

California Art Club's 300 Artworks Exhibition at Former PMCA Building

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By Toti O'Brien

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Here is one more occasion for art lovers to enjoy the wonderful building formerly hosting the Pasadena Museum of Contemporary Art.

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From March 3rd to March 29th the main gallery will display the California Art Club's 108th Annual Gold Medal Exhibition. This incredible show spotlights works by 240 artists who apply time-honored techniques to contemporary subjects, esthetics and sensibilities.

The California Art Club is one of the oldest, most active, most renowned art organizations in the world. Though established in 1909 by early California Impressionists—or plein air painters—it espoused since inception a philosophy of inclusivity, embracing other media such as drawing and sculpture, welcoming artists from all geographical areas and of course women. The Club's mission—to foster traditional fine arts and their understanding, to produce shows and furnish educational opportunities—has remained steady throughout more than a century.

Please make sure to check the schedule of events connected to the show! In agreement with its educational scope, the CAC offers a wide range of opportunities to delve deeper into the artworks and further enjoy them. Tours, lectures by the major experts in the field, artists talks on significant topics and live demonstrations: the calendar is punctuated with treats. All events—like the exhibit itself—are free to the public.

I had a chance of previewing the show during installation. A sense of cohesion spread not only from the work hanging on the walls—also from the harmonious interplay of curators, installers and those artists who were present and involved.



Peter Adams (Photo - Toti O'Brien)

Peter Adams

I was delighted to meet Peter Adams, president of CAC since 1993. One of his works—“Forgiveness Sunday”—lies on trestles as we talk while the artist meticulously, patiently applies varnish onto the surface. The scene shows the interior of an orthodox church located in Hollywood. The altar is ornamented in complex byzantine fashion. Priests clad in richly patterned chasubles bend to kiss crosses held up by other priests. In the foreground stand two devotees, head covered with laced scarves. But the abundance of decorative elements isn’t what catches the eye. On the contrary, a great calm emanates from the piece, an impression of wholeness—an exhilarating feeling of suspension, rather levitation. Otherworldly light soaks the painting—shiny, golden and simultaneously delicate, soft—both blinding and revealing.

Sacred scenes from various religions are frequent in Adams’ recent production, captured in various parts of the world during his many journeys, always painted from life. As he travels, the artist paints daily—“every place,” he says “is special in its own way”—often seeking unusual lighting conditions, up at sunrise or lingering after sunset, at night, when “the atmosphere is more vibrant”. Both in darkness and in very bright light, he explains, “not everything is spelled out”. Details can be suggested and forms silhouetted, leaving room for the viewer’s interpretation, summoning the eerie, transcending atmosphere that so powerfully characterizes Adams’s style.

Adams also likes to paint Opera scenes while they are being performed. CAC has a special arrangement with L.A. Opera, allowing artists to work during the show—a small flashlight fastened to their head in order not to disturb stage lighting. Adams loves to explore the effects of colored theatrical lights in conjunction with the variety and beauty of costumes and decors. The resulting artwork is vivid, intense, magical.

Asked about his practice, inspiration or technique Peter Adams provides the most clear, satisfying and interesting answers with grace and directness. Don’t miss out his artist talk on the opening day—March 3rd, at 2 pm—focused upon the use of light and color. I promise it will be fascinating.



Nikita Budkov (Photo - Toti O'Brien)

Nikita Budkov

Fresh from Russia, young Nikita Budkov is Adams' studio assistant and a full-fledged artist of his own. One of his figurative paintings—"East of the Sun"—features some of his main motifs of inspiration: folk songs, costumes and tales, Russian lore, mythology and symbolism, the romantic and the sublime. A blond woman is portrayed with masterly technique. Her features are intense, vivid, present. Yet the sunset light brazening her blond hair, contrasted with the penumbra shadowing her gaze, creates mystery, eeriness and depth.

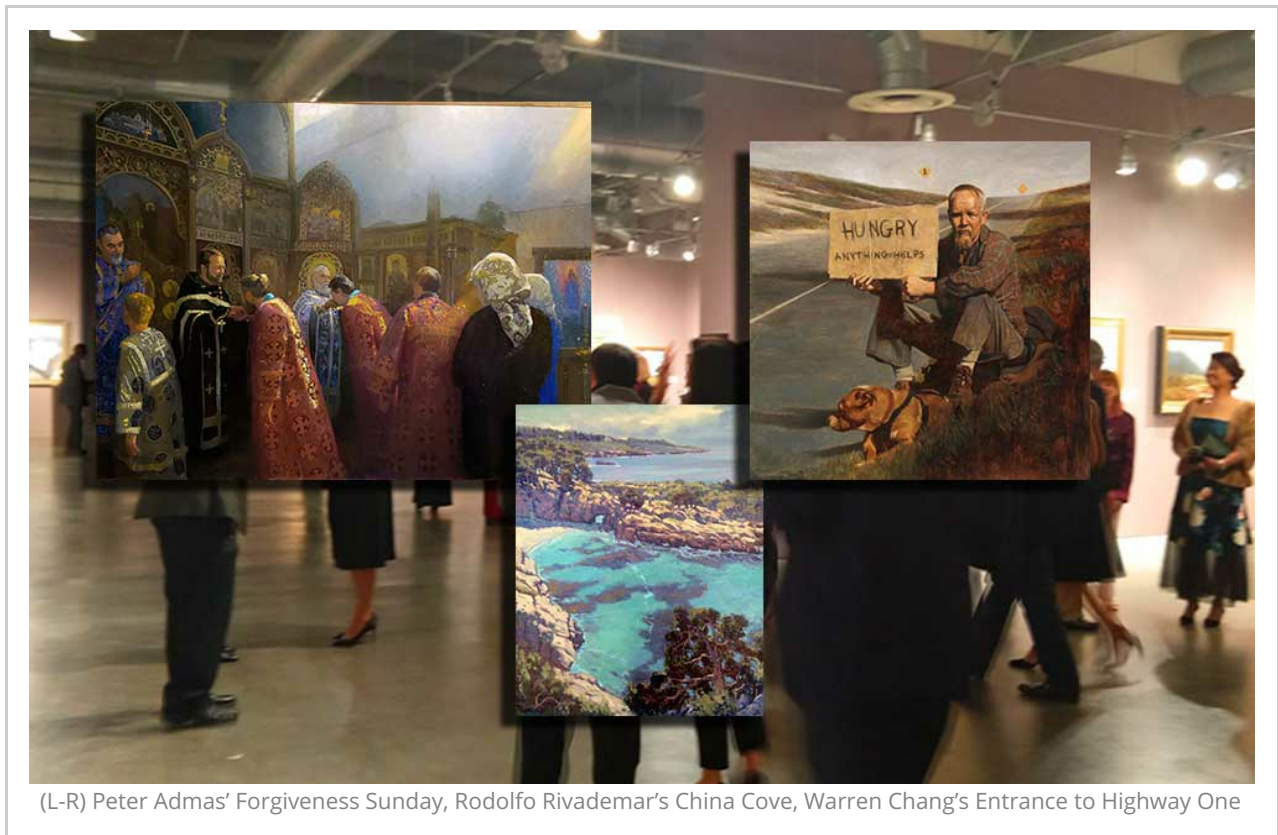


Rodolfo Rivademar (Photo - Toti O'Brien)

Rodolfo Rivademar

Artist Rodolfo Rivademar originally hails from Argentina. Like the wide majority of CAC artists he has a long history of solo exhibits in the US and abroad, and his work is part of many collections. Among other sources of inspiration he loves painting the coastal areas of Northern California, and the piece included in the show is "China Cove in Point Lobos". He has been always fascinated by the transparency of water, he says. Certainly he has mastered wonderful skills for rendering it, probably through the patience of long sessions of painting en plein air, during his favorite months of January and February— stormy season, not too sunny and endowed with a special mood. "The place quiet, almost vacant," he says, "favors a meditative state and the flow of inspiration." The pristine turquoise of the water is exalted by the cool tones of the surrounding landscape—rocks, sky, vegetation—unified by a foundation of raw umber and white that lends to the entire scene a cohesive, splendid chromatic quality. Although enthralled by nature and committed to its true representation, the artist utilizes techniques borrowed from photography to purposely stretch the perspective, adding to the space an extra

dimension—enhanced depth endowing the scene with almost palpable silence, a soft sense of nostalgia. Such device pointedly demonstrates the philosophy of the California Art Club—treasuring and honing traditional techniques, simultaneously experimenting with innovative concepts. “Like Renaissance artists, looking at the past in order to take off,” says Rivademar.



The show includes 300 artworks—drawings, paintings and sculptures, landscapes, still-lives and portraits—covering all sort of subjects from the exotic or theatrical to the urban and contemporary. An entire room is devoted to miniature.

Take your time. Slow down. Enjoy the diversity. Meet the fabulous artists.

108th Annual Gold Medal Exhibition

March 3 to 29, 2019

Wed. through Sun., 11 am - 5 pm

Admission

Free