

A Gem in China



“It felt like an Indiana Jones adventure some of the places we’d go,” says artist **Chuck Kovacic**. He speaks of an expedition he and a number of other California-based artists took to southern China’s Guangzhou province to explore and capture the beauty and allure of the Chinese countryside. “A lot of these communities are so quickly disappearing, particularly the people living and fishing on the Pearl River,” he says. An exhibition at American Legacy Fine Arts, titled *China’s Crown Jewel: Recent Paintings of the Guangzhou Province by American Artists*, brings the plein air works of these artists together, many of whom at one point trained at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

The gallery notes, “The rapid transformation of southern China’s Guangzhou province from an agricultural region into a global leader for international trade has truly created a feast for the eyes, juxtaposing charming Chinese houseboats floating along the Pearl River Delta against a backdrop of imposing skyscrapers.” Artists whose work will be shown in the exhibition include Kovacic, **Aimee Erickson**, **Bryan Mark Taylor**, **Calvin Liang**, **Jason Situ**, **Joseph Paquet**, **Keith Bond**, **Michael Situ** and **Peter Adams**.

“I kept feeling curious as to what was happening to these buildings and villages,” says Kovacic. He explains that the Chinese government is seeing that these buildings are properly maintained and protected. “It was very gratifying to see them come back full circle and say we need to preserve some of this.” He continues, “The area we were painting in the Kaiping area [the center of southern China] is already noted for the artists who’ve come out of there—**Mian Situ**, **Jason Situ**, **Michael Situ**.” Among Kovacic’s paintings in the exhibition are *They That Tend* and *Lotus Gatherers*, depicting villagers hard at work.

Liang’s oil *Houseboat* depicts the hometown boats in Kaiping. “Before, some people used to be living in these kinds of boats for their whole life. Now the Chinese government moved all those fishing men to the apartments, then saved all those boats for tourists to visit. It is a nature reserve





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now," he says. "When I visited Kaiping last year I felt so excited about the hometown boats, which remind me of the old days of China. I want to convey to the viewer the old Chinese fishing man's life."

"China is a land of contrasts, and high-tech cities like Shenzhen have very little in common with the humble countryside villages not far away," says Taylor, whose painting, *Market Day*, featured in the exhibition depicts a small, rural town in southern China. The locals say it was given the name "49" by the government, he explains. "Ubiquitous tarps shelter the shops from frequent winter rains, and the motorcycle parked on the left is carrying fresh fuel tanks for local residents," he says. "Most of these places are pieced together with recycled materials and yet despite these humble circumstances, the visual delight and complexity stirs the senses in a way the big city cannot."

These and other works will be on view through July 28. ●



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American Legacy Fine Arts

949 Linda Vista Avenue • Pasadena, CA 91103 •

(626) 577-7733 • www.americanlegacyfinearts.com

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Aimee Erickson, *China
Porch & Pink Bloom*, oil
on canvas panel, 9 x 12"

2
Calvin Liang, *Houseboat*,
oil on canvas, 16 x 20"

3
Bryan Mark Taylor,
Market Day, oil on panel,
12 x 16"

4
Jason Situ, *Autumn Rice
Fields*, oil on canvas
panel, 8 x 10"