



ARTS & LIT

# Scenic Route Ahead: Where Paintbrushes Met the Pacific

by [Nathan Wang](#)

July 15, 2025



Arroyo Grove by Sam Hyde Harris.  
Photo: American Legacy Fine Arts.

American Legacy Fine Arts in Pasadena, a private art gallery, will debut *Scenic Route: A Half-Century of California Discovery, 1900–1950*, a new exhibition opening Aug.15 and running through Oct. 11. The gallery brings together a collection of 30 paintings, inviting visitors to see California's landscapes as seen by early 20th-century artists.

Gallery Director Elaine Adams describes the exhibition and its pieces as “a classic California road trip.” “It was artwork we’ve acquired, and we’re thinking that we have a language happening here from this perspective of approximately 100 years ago,” she continued.

The series follows the manner in which artists, some of whom turned into prominent figures in American art history, documented California during its growth. By horse, automobile, or train, these artists were among the first to document the state's landscape visually. The exhibition features both plein air (paintings created in the open air) and studio paintings. Works range from “Cows in Summer Landscape” by Angel De Service Espoy to pastel paintings, such as “California Stormy Sky” by Theodore N. Lukits. Artists represented include William Lees Judson, Lukits, Alfred R. Mitchell and Karl Yens, among others.



William Lees Judson's *Arroyo Seco, Near Pasadena* is featured at the gallery.  
Photo: American Fine Arts.

William Lees Judson was a leader among early California plein air painters. Not only was he one of the first artists to live and work in Los Angeles, but he also deeply cared about the surrounding landscape—and was, in fact, a crusader for clean air, winning battles for conservation and environmental concerns. Judson acutely believed in preserving the sense of freedom, natural beauty, and quality craftsmanship that was then the lifestyle of southern California at the turn of the twentieth century.

Also represented in the exhibition is the work of American landscape painter, Alfred R. Mitchell. He was an early California Impressionist painter. Educated at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, he was the president of the San Diego Art Guild and the La Jolla Art Association. He became known as the “Dean of San Diego County artists.”

“We have this fabulous selection of work that can be looked at as individual works of art, because each one has its own story, and each artist is important to know,” Adams shared.

Select pieces in the exhibition have been recently purchased by the private art gallery, and others have been collected. All pieces will be for sale, and viewing is available by appointment only.

In addition to Californian plein air paintings, popularized by Judson, the gallery is host to interior pieces, including one by Karl Yens. Yens was a German-born artist who trained in Berlin under Max Koch and in Paris under Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant and Jean-Paul Laurens before emigrating to the U.S. in 1901. He became a noted muralist in New York and Washington, D.C., and settled in Southern California, initially in Los Angeles and Pasadena.

“We have one interior piece that I love by Carl Jens. It’s in gouache, and I love the juicy colors of it. It is of his interior studio in San Pedro. That’s the part of that road trip idea, too. You’re going to be indoors sometimes. There’s a bookcase there, and it makes me feel like I’m taking this road trip, and now I’m in my motel room reading a book,” described Adams.

## DEETS

- [American Legacy Fine Arts Gallery](#)
- (626) 577-7733.
- Exhibition open from Aug. 15 to Oct. 11
- Tuesday through Friday (10 a.m. – 6 p.m.) and Saturday (11 a.m. – 5 p.m)