



WARREN CHANG

Behind the Easel



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Warren Chang is known for his paintings of field workers in Monterey County, California. When Katharina Powers, director of Art Ventures Gallery in Menlo Park, California, visited his studio, she saw his interior paintings. She says, "These intimate interiors are an inward look at the artist's life within his studio and classroom environments, which includes his relationship with his family, friends, models and art students. Through viewing these paintings, we become witness to the artist's life and work through the passage of time." *Warren Chang: An Artist's Life Behind the Easel* will be shown at the gallery through January 31.

Chang was a freelance illustrator for 20 years before turning to fine art painting in about 2000.

"Working from a photo reference was pretty much the norm in illustration," he says. When he turned to fine art he ran into those who thought photo references were anathema. As he gained confidence, he returned to using photo references but kept up his painting from life in the studio.

The exhibition is a 20-year autobiography of his life in the studio. *In the Artist's Studio*, 2012, is an homage to family and



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1
In the Artist's Studio,
oil on canvas, 40 x 60"

2
Artist in Her Studio,
oil on canvas, 24 x 30"

3
Gill Gallery Interior,
oil on canvas, 28 x 57"

4
The Discussion,
oil on canvas, 30 x 24"



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friends as well as to Norman Rockwell. Prominently displayed on his bookshelf is Thomas S. Buechner's biography *Norman Rockwell*. Peering in the door is the artist's father, a reference to Rockwell's device of leading the viewer into the painting. The people looking at the painting of the painting we are viewing are his wife, sons and "people important to me."

Chang's wife, Heather, appears in *The Discussion*, 2009, a similar but more intimate scene. "The painting is an homage to my wife giving me advice on a current painting." There is "a little tension" as Heather contemplates how to make her comments and the artist tries not to resist. "A lot of times," he explains, "the paintings she has criticized have gone on to sell or to win an award."

Gill Gallery Interior, 2015, shows the artist and his friends painting from life. The gallery had hosted a retrospective of his paintings several years earlier and he shows them displayed on the back wall.

"The field worker paintings are the world around me," he says. "The interiors are more of an inward look at my life. I can see the passage of time, of me aging and the people who have been important to me." ●

Art Ventures Gallery

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