

Art & Entertainment

Stephen Mirich brings the ocean and the coastline into the Palos Verdes Art Center

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"Tranquil Reflections, Malibu Creek State Park, 1999," by Stephen Eugene Mirich

The call of the wild

Stephen Eugene Mirich gets the show he deserves

by Bondo Wyszpolski

That fellow down there, perched on shoreline rocks as the moon rises in the sky, leans forward and makes another brushstroke. If the light is too dim, he doesn't give up and leave, not yet, but turns on a small LED light so he can continue to capture the essence of the waves and the last glow of sunset.

A few years ago, painter Stephen Mirich told me that, "As early as I can remember I have been in love with the sea." Was it, he wondered, due to his growing up in the port town of San Pedro? Or was it something in his Croatian genes that came from the island of Brac on the Dalmatian Coast?

"Almost everything I've pursued has been about or around the sea; and that's why I'm lucky to be living here, by the sea, and sharing that passion for it through my paintings."



Surrounded by a raging sea, Mirich paints on. Photo courtesy of the artist

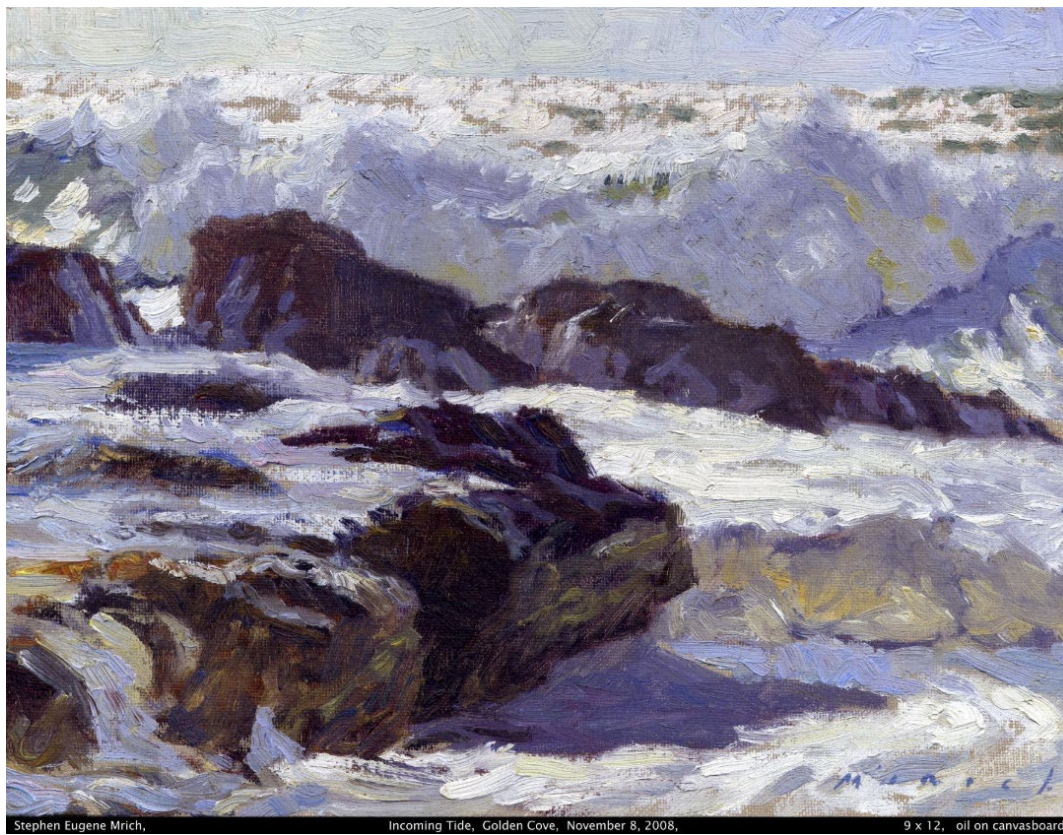
“Come Stand Beside Me For a Moment” is the title of Mirich’s solo exhibition which opens on Sept. 12 at the Palos Verdes Art Center. A little over 50 pieces will be on view.

A few days ago, Mirich told me that he and the center’s executive director, Daniela Saxa-Kaneko, spent several hours curating the show, sifting through hundreds of pictures.

“I’m still making some adjustments,” he said. “I want the show to be about who I am as an artist and why I paint.”

And why does he paint?

“Art has always been my main interest and passion,” he has said. And furthermore, “Being outdoors, painting on location is what I love. It just so happens that we live along a beautiful coast and a very special harbor. So, I paint what I know and love and what is right in front of me.”



“Incoming Tide, Golden Cove, November 8, 2008,” by Stephen Eugene Mirich

In advance of his solo exhibition, Mirich expressed what it is he tries to be attentive to when he takes his paintkit and steps outside: “Working directly from nature has taught me patience. The landscape is never still. Rather than simply recording what I see, I hope to express what it feels like to be present — to experience the quiet rhythm and beauty of the natural world... The subtle shift of atmosphere, light changes, shadows move, clouds gather and disappear, and every passing breeze alters the feeling of a place. These fleeting moments are often overlooked, yet they are the ones that continue to inspire my work.”

Stephen Mirich picked up his first paintbrush over 60 years ago, and he hasn’t put it down since.

Come Stand Beside Me for a Moment**, which includes new and older work, opens with a reception from 6 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 12, at the Palos Verdes Art Center, 5504 Crestridge Road, Rancho Palos Verdes. Through Nov. 14. Call (310) 541-2479 or visit pvartcenter.org. **PEN