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top: Guy Rose, *Laguna Eucalyptus*

*Dear Friend of the Museum,*

This year, The Irvine Museum celebrates its nineteenth anniversary. In that brief time, the museum has established itself as the leading institution for the study, preservation, and display of California Impressionist art in the United States. Since our inception, The Irvine Museum has published 17 books and assisted in the production of 3 PBS documentaries on the art of California. The current exhibition and those before it are a testament to the museum’s commitment and desire to educate and help preserve this important link to our state’s culture and history.

We are now poised to grow and expand our outreach and educational programs and increase our presence in Orange County. Your support will make the difference for students, teachers, researchers and artists who rely on our partnership to provide programs that integrate arts into the classroom. Through your generosity, the museum will be able to expand many of the programs that have proven to be so important to our community.

Your generous support enables the museum to expand and broaden many of the education and exhibition programs that are so critical to this community. Together, we can make The Irvine Museum a permanent and readily accessible showcase of our artistic heritage for generations to come. With your contribution, we can make this a reality.

—James Irvine Swinden, *President*



from left: Percy Gray, *Landscape with Flowers*, The Edward H. and Yvonne J. Boseker Collection; Xavier Martinez, *San Leandro Bay*

**CURRENT EXHIBITION**

*A California Rhapsody: Early Artists of the Bohemian Club*

In 1872, a number of San Francisco painters, writers, musicians and actors joined together as a group and formed the Bohemian Club. The club proved to be popular and began to thrive. In April 1874, Henry Edwards, president of the Bohemian Club, reported that this “association of talent, which from small beginnings has, in the brief space of two years, made for itself a shining mark upon the literary and artistic records not only of California, but of America at large.”

The artists in this exhibition were all early members of this remarkable club. Among them was **Percy Gray** (1869-1952), best known for his paintings in watercolor, who favored views of native wildflowers, stands of oaks, and groups of elegant eucalyptus, often shrouded in fog. **William Keith** (1838-1911), called “California’s Old Master,” was perhaps the leading figure in the San Francisco art community. His early paintings were often mountain epics painted in descriptive realism. His later paintings are darker, smaller and more intimate with a marked emphasis on mood over subject matter. **Xavier Martinez** (1869-1943) was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, settled in San Francisco and became an American citizen. Martinez was one of the leading figures in the Tonalist movement, an art movement that produced soft and gentle views of the San Francisco Bay area. **Granville Redmond** (1871-1935) was one of California’s most popular landscape painters. While he preferred to paint in the moody and introspective style of the Tonalist, the public favored his color-filled Impressionistic paintings of rolling hills often covered with golden poppies and blue lupines. **William Ritschel** (1864-1949) loved to paint the sea in its many moods. His works brought him high praise in Europe as well as the United States where he was called the “Dean of American Marine Painters.” **Amédée Joullin** (1862-1917), the son of French parents, studied at the California School of Design in San Francisco and later continued his training in Paris. After several years, Joullin returned to San Francisco in the late 1880s and painted landscapes, city scenes and historical paintings of the West. Painted in the academic style that preceded Impressionism. His paintings are typically well crafted, tightly drawn and highly finished works, often in the tonal colors associated with the Barbizon School of French landscape painting.



William Ritschel, *The Glorious Pacific*

California Rhapsody closes November 3.

## ***Plein Air Painting: a Vehicle, Not a Destination***

by Jean Stern

The term “plein air” comes from the French phrase *en plein-air* which is an idiom that does not translate directly, but essentially means “outdoors.” Similarly, in Italian, the phrase is *al fresco*, and in Spanish it’s *al aire libre*. The custom of working outdoors has been practiced for several hundred years, but it was limited to drawing and watercolor painting, as oil paints were not suited for use outside the studio.

Produced in pot-sized batches, oil paints were necessarily restricted to the studio since the only way to prevent them from drying and hardening was to keep them warm, at a constant low simmer, on a stove in the studio. Artists tried various way to carry small amounts of prepared paint to the field to sketch outdoors but none succeeded.

In 1841, an artist named John Rand (1801-1873) invented the collapsible soft-metal paint tube that we know today, initially sealed with a cork stopper and later with a screw-on cap. This afforded easy portability and by collapsing part of the tube with each use, the remaining paint stayed fresh and soft. The following year, Winsor & Newton began selling paint tubes, thereby revolutionizing the art of painting.

The first painters credited with painting *en plein-air* in a systematic manner were the artists of the Barbizon School. Originally a small group of Parisian artists who associated around Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867) in the 1830s, they broke with French tradition by rejecting the pre-set convention of the Academic manner that stressed carefully composed classical settings, even when painting landscapes. In 1848, Rousseau led the group out of Paris to the Barbizon Forest, where they communed with nature and recorded their experiences by painting *en plein air*. In addition to Rousseau, the most notable Barbizon artists included Camille Corot (1796-1875), Narcisse Diaz de la Peña (1807-1876), and Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878), who often gets distinction as the “first plein air painter.”



William Wendt, *Laguna Hills*

Following upon the footsteps of the Barbizon, the French Impressionists became the great popularizers of plein air painting. Impressionist landscapes were distinctive and often drew both criticism and praise for their color-filled and convincing effects of true natural light.

Plein air has proven over and over that it is the best approach to paint natural light. The chief incentive for painting *en plein air* is the earnest desire to capture a specific and unique moment of natural light as it illuminates the landscape. And as all natural daylight is transient, constantly changing from hour to hour as the sun completes its perceived route from east to west across the sky, the opportunity to paint a specific effect of natural light is limited to no more than about two hours at midday, and often less than one hour at the extremes of the day: sunrise or sunset.



Natural light does not stand still, it is always moving. Perhaps like no other artist, the plein air painter is mesmerized by natural light. The passion for light drives them to seek the genuine experience and paint it, regardless of climate, weather or natural impediments. Hence, it is as a plein air painter that the landscape painter finds the ultimate reason for being, and at the same time, confronts their most rigorous challenge: to capture quickly the brilliant and fluid visual sensation of natural light at a specific time and place while facing the formidable constraint of fleeting natural light.

Today, the term “plein air” has found great universality among contemporary artists and collectors of their works. Quite often, as seen in countless art magazine advertisements, the legitimacy of plein air painting has been subverted to accommodate those who seek to appropriate the popularity and commercial success now attendant with that designation. Today, there are many who describe themselves as “plein air painters” but in fact are not.

At the same time, and yet in a completely different way, the practice of plein air has suffered abuse by being reduced to some sort of status symbol. Indeed, in many circles it has become a yardstick that says if you are not a plein air painter, you cannot be a good painter.

“Plein air” is not a philosophy and it is not the artists’ Nirvana. It is not the end product, it is in fact, the beginning. It is how one starts the process of creating a landscape painting. It is a specialized tool that all landscape artists need, and like any other tool, one needs to learn its proper uses as well as its limitations.

The true, on-site plein air sketch is generally a small, bright painting of a scene that the artist wants to paint on a large scale format in the studio. It is tempting to keep painting small, carefully observed, brilliant little jewels that tend to sell well, and unfortunately, many artists do just that. The plein air sketch confirms its reason for being when it leads to a refined studio-painted, majestic final work.

Now is the time to restore our dedication to landscape painting, not only as artists, but as collectors, dealers and art historians as well. The sweet siren’s song of the small plein air sketch as the painters’ panacea has to be left behind. To paint the landscape is one of the most ancient of human endeavors. Landscape is surely the most supreme of art subjects and it needs to be shown in a large format.

Nature is always with us and indeed it is within us. It has long been imprinted on the human mind and is part of the human collective subconscious. Our affinity to nature is inescapable. The vision of a beautiful day makes us feel uplifted. A day in the country refreshes and restores us. When we can no longer deal with the modern world, with all its stress and pollution, we turn to nature. A blue sky gives pleasure, green grass is calming, fresh air is rejuvenating. Nature is indeed our mother and we turn to her when we need respite.

Honor nature by properly portraying her majesty and grandeur, a small plein air sketch just will not do!



top: Edgar Payne painting *en plein air* in the Sierra Nevada mountains

above: Edgar Payne, *The Sierra Divide*



## UPCOMING EXHIBITION

### *Franz A. Bischoff: The Life and Art of an American Master* November 12, 2011 through March 8, 2012

Franz A. Bischoff (1864-1929) began his artistic training at a craft school in Bohemia at the age of 12. He trained in ceramic decoration. In 1882, he came to the United States and worked as a painter in a ceramic factory in New York City. He moved to Pittsburgh, then to Fostoria, Ohio, and finally to Dearborn, Michigan, continuing to work as a porcelain painter.

Bischoff became one of the foremost porcelain painters of his day and is still regarded today as the greatest American porcelain painter. His porcelain works were exhibited at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. He founded the Bischoff School of Ceramic Art in Detroit and in New York City. Additionally, he formulated and manufactured many of his own colors, participated in exhibitions and won several awards, earning a reputation as "King of the Rose Painters."

He first visited California in 1900, and finding the climate and scenery appealing, made plans to move his family, arriving in Pasadena in 1906. In 1908, he built a studio-home along the Arroyo Seco in South Pasadena, which included a gallery, ceramic workshop, and painting studio. In 1912, he took an extended tour of Europe where he studied the works of the Old Masters and the Impressionists.

On his return to California, Bischoff turned to landscape painting and gradually abandoned porcelain decoration. Through the 1920s, he painted the coastal areas of Monterey and Laguna Beach, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the desert near Palm Springs. Some of his most charming works were painted in the small central California village of Cambria. In 1928, he and his friend, the artist John Christopher Smith, traveled to Utah, where they painted in Zion National Park. He died at home, on February 5, 1929.

Bischoff exhibited with the California Art Club and the Laguna Beach Art Association. In 1924, he received the Huntington Prize, an annual award given for the most popular painting at the California Art Club exhibition.

top right: Franz Bischoff, *San Juan Capistrano Mission Yard*

above, clockwise from left: Franz Bischoff, *California Poppies* (porcelain); *Roses* (porcelain); Franz Bischoff and family, 1906

below, from left:  
Franz Bischoff, *Alpenglow, High Sierra*;  
*Arroyo Seco Bridge*; *Roses* (Private Collection, Courtesy of The Irvine Museum)



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## *Educational Outreach Programs* by Dora James, Curator of Education



Since we first opened, in 1993, The Irvine Museum has provided students in our community with a unique educational experience. With each of our exhibitions, the museum creates field trip programs which are fun, interesting and challenging. Using the original work of art, our docents instruct the children to look at the paintings, tell us what they see in them, and combine the visual experience with one or more aspects of our history, artistic heritage and environmental awareness. Often, the students go back to their class and draw their interpretation of their favorite painting from the field trip. The drawings are charming and on occasion fully capture the spirit and feeling of the original work of art. For me to witness the wonder and enthusiasm of children who normally have little or no exposure to the fine arts is what I find most rewarding, just to plant that seed of creativity and reverence for art and nature.

So far this year, our education program has toured over 1,100 students. Few of the schools in our community can afford to rent a school bus, so the museum pays for them. We are able to do this vital service to our community thanks to timely grants from dedicated donors.

For more information about our education programs, please contact Dora James at: (949) 476-0294, or send email to: [djames@irvinemuseum.org](mailto:djames@irvinemuseum.org).

above: Donna Schuster, *On the Beach*

right: 4th grade field trip attendee, drawing after *On the Beach*

below: letter to Dora James from attendee



Dear, Dora,

I really liked the art museum. It was really fun. I wish I could go all the time, but I can't. I really liked the painting Moonbeam. It was beautiful. I wish I could have that kind of art. I got interested as soon as I got there. I was so excited when I got there because I never had gone to an art museum. I really liked it so, so much. I think I might go there again.

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