

It takes a Village to Bring you Community Art

- Cathy Carey

We live in an artists' paradise! So much natural beauty, and an endless variety of scenes, from the mountains to the desert to the ocean. It's no wonder this area has so many full time painters and artists. Even though it's easy to find a beautiful scene to paint, it is pretty tough to find an affordable space to rent for a gallery where there's enough foot traffic to hope for sales. Artists often struggle to get a break until their work is recognized enough to be represented by a well placed gallery. Until then it's up to the guardian angels of culture in a community to step in and offer assistance and places where local artists can show and sell their work. Local art is a big draw to visitors to our area - they want to look at and take home a piece of the beauty as seen through the eyes of the artists who live here. And for residents, having a painting of a familiar favorite scene is part of making their home a rejuvenating sanctuary. Street festivals are great fun, but are also a source of wear and tear on the artists and their artwork. The optimum viewing for Art to be seen is indoors, where it can be afforded the respect it deserves and seen in a clean dignified setting with good lighting.

It doesn't get any more dignified than the gallery in Rancho Santa Fe. The gallery is located right in town across from the Inn of Rancho Santa Fe, behind Union Bank. The artists of the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild, a non-profit organization, were joined in this venture with Union Bank of California and the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation, who donated space and initial monies. Across the courtyard, the Wells Fargo Bank donates gallery wall space so when you're doing your banking business you can enjoy the work of local artists. Community partners like these who donate time, money or space, make our communities a more thoughtful experience for everyone. Every artistic community has a unique flavor and The Rancho Santa Fe Art Gallery is strongly identified with the California Impressionist movement. Many of the members are plein air painters, which means they paint their subjects outdoors on location, often finishing the piece in one or two sittings. This style was started by the French Impressionists (mid 1880's) and these painters often painted the same scenes together, each interpreting it in their own unique way. American painters who went to Europe to study at that time would join them in painting outdoors and many eventually returned home and taught their peers this style of plein air painting, which became known as American Impressionism. It caught on in a big way on the east coast giving rise to art colonies such as Shinnecock Hills on eastern Long Island, Monhegan Island off the mid-Maine coast, Old Lyme, Connecticut and areas of Boston and Philadelphia. Some of these east coast artists, William Wendt (1865 - 1946) in particular, traveled west and when they reached California, transformed the style again into California Impressionism. Art colonies from San Diego to Laguna, Santa Barbara, Carmel, Monterey and San Francisco were hotbeds of artistic energy. San Diego was an especially desirable location for plein air painting, with a large group of the California Impressionists establishing themselves in this area. Many were members of the California Art Club (co-founded by William Wendt and established in 1909). The California Art club is the Western United States' largest professional art organization, and is still going strong today with over 2,000 members who paint in the same style as the original California Impressionists. It is one of the few art styles to remain in practice through an uninterrupted period from generation to generation. Marianne R. Champlin, founder of the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild in 1996, works in the California Impressionist style and is a member of the California Art Club. Her work can be seen in the current show at the gallery, "Figures in Art" on exhibit through April 29th. "Spring Colors" is the next show, with a reception Thursday May 4th from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., at the gallery located at 6004 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067 (858) 759-3545 www.ranchosantafeartguild.org

Follow the sun from Rancho Santa Fe west to Encinitas to find the new gallery space born in the building formerly known as the Red Sand Clothing Co., and before that the Coast Dispatch newspaper. The current owner, friend to the arts John DeWald, has graciously rented the building to local artists for a token amount while he awaits the permits to rebuild on the site. For the next year, a collection of artist-owned galleries and the Offtrack Gallery, run by the San Dieguito Art Guild, will be in a prime location on Hwy 101 just north of the Lumberyard during the thick of summer pedestrian traffic going to and from the many unique restaurants and trendy shops. The free-spirited artistic voice of Encinitas is vivid and colorful, like the surf shops and psychics, bohemians and trendsetters, who call this beach town home. This eclectic blend of artists in a warehouse-sized location is an irresistible draw, and the opening day reception was packed. This location even has an off street parking lot, a truly amazing combination of good will and good luck for the artists of San Diego. The new gallery building is located at 687 South Coast Highway, 101 in Encinitas in the grey building with the big red painted triangle. Upcoming receptions will be May 6th and 7th 1PM - 6PM and June 10th and 11th 1PM to 7PM. Preview work at www.offtrackgallery.com and www.artstudiosandiego.com.