



# LAND OF SUNLIGHT

Contemporary Paintings of San Diego County

Featuring 100 Fine Artists

## ***PAINTINGS*** *FROM THE* ***LAND OF*** ***SUNLIGHT***

**PRESENTATION  
BY THE AUTHOR**

November 28, 2018

James Lightner

# PAINTINGS FROM THE LAND OF SUNLIGHT

Presented to the Wednesday Club of San Diego, November 28, 2018

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Front Cover:

Front cover of *Land of Sunlight: Contemporary Paintings of San Diego County*, published by San Diego Flora in 2007. Out of print.

Back Cover:

Back cover of *Land of Sunlight*.

Also from San Diego Flora:

*San Diego County Native Plants*, 3d ed. (2011). A comprehensive color field guide to native and naturalized plants of San Diego County, incorporating the latest taxonomy from *The Jepson Manual*, 2d ed.

*San Diego County Native Plants in the 1830s, The Collections of Thomas Coulter, Thomas Nuttall, and HMS Sulphur with George Barclay and Richard Hinds* (2014). Accounts of the visits of UK naturalists to San Diego County in the 1830s, with detailed footnotes and historical background.

*Parry's California Notebooks, 1849-51* (2014). A transcription of the notebooks of Dr. Charles C. Parry, also including letters to Dr. John Torrey, more than 200 historical and scientific footnotes, appendices, and detailed index.



San Diego Flora  
1220 Rosecrans Street, suite 301  
San Diego, CA 92106  
www.sandiegoflora.com

Thank you for the invitation to speak about *Land of Sunlight*, an art-book published by San Diego Flora in 2007. I will share with you pictures from the book and some thoughts about them and the artists who painted them. *Land of Sunlight* has been out of print for ten years, so we printed this 32-page booklet that is a version of today's talk. The booklet includes images of all the paintings I'll be showing you, and you are welcome to purchase it.

You can also have a look at San Diego Flora's other three publications - *San Diego County Native Plants* (3d ed.), *Parry's California Notebooks 1849-51*, and *San Diego County Native Plants in the 1830s*.

*Land of Sunlight* had the subtitle *Contemporary Paintings of San Diego County, Featuring 100 Fine Artists*. The idea was to assemble paintings by living artists that represent scenes from all around San Diego County, from the coast to the mountains and desert, giving readers a visual tour of the region. For today's presentation I've chosen a small subset of the paintings including some of my favorites. Unfortunately there are many excellent pictures and artists whom I won't have time to mention.

*Land of Sunlight* was a best-seller at the San Diego Museum of Art for about a year, and we considered improving it and publishing a second edition, but we decided not to in part because the California Art Club (CAC) came out with a superior publication soon after us. CAC is a century-old organization of fine artists based in Pasadena. The CAC book is titled *California Light* (Figure 1) and is a hardcover with images from the entire state. It's available for purchase from various sources. The quality of the paintings is consistently high. Some of the CAC artists featured in *California Light* also contributed to *Land of Sunlight*.

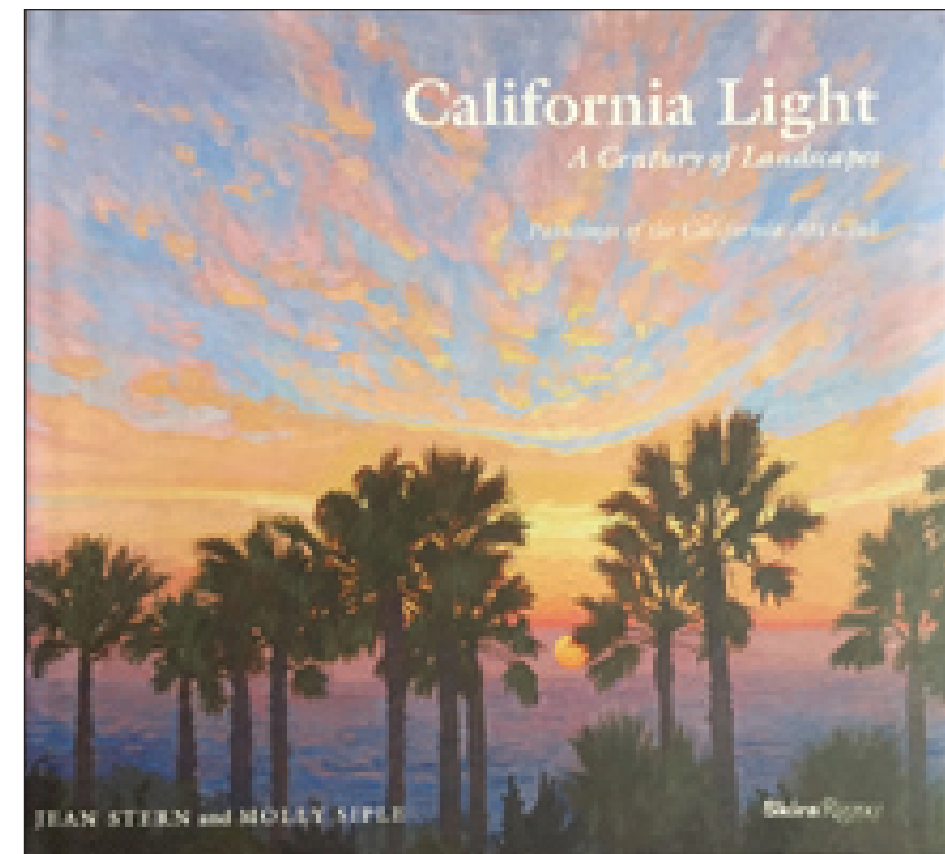


Figure 1. *California Light*, published by the California Art Club in 2011.

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## Paintings of the Coast

This first picture from *Land of Sunlight* is by John Comer, who paints along the California coast and in Baja California. It was created probably 30 years ago and shows a view from Cabrillo Monument at the tip of Point Loma. You can tell it was painted decades ago because it features Eucalyptus trees in the foreground that were cut down by the Park Service because Eucalyptus are non-native. The trees are the focus of Mr. Comer's composition. If you look back at the history of California landscape painting, Eucalyptus were a common subject. They were widely planted in coastal areas and had elegant forms with tall, slim, pale trunks, finely delineated branches and copper-gold foliage. What I like most about John's picture, however, is the sweep of Coronado and San Miguel Mountain in the background. The crescent shape of San Diego Bay, paralleled by the curve of Coronado Beach down to the Strand, give the view its appeal; it's more pleasing to the eye than a straight line would be. Mr. Comer's pyramidal Mount Miguel looks like Popocatepetl and reminds me of volcanoes of eons ago. I liked this painting so much we put it on the front cover of the book. It's a beautiful view, indeed.



**Figure 2.** *Point Loma Panorama*, by John Comer. (30x40)

Another thing you see, which is common in landscape paintings, is that sky and/or water dominate the canvas. Only a sliver of the picture actually depicts land or activity. You also see here how the foreground is far more colorful than the background and has stronger contrast. This effect of causing the background to recede by making it bluer, grayer, less defined and lighter is called aerial perspective and is essential to create the illusion of depth or distance.

This next picture (**Figure 3**) is another Point Loma scene that may be familiar. I'm not sure if that white sailboat is still docked at the white pier at La Playa but in my mind it's iconic. The cove of the yacht basin is as idyllic as any in the United States. The tranquility conveyed by the solitary boat explains why the neighborhood's so precious. The artist is Don Young, and he lives in La Playa or used to. Like many fine artists, Mr. Young has also worked as a commercial artist. Some of my favorite historical artists did advertising or media work in addition to their fine-art paintings; Frederic Remington and Maynard Dixon come to mind.

You can see here that the water dominates the canvas. I like the way he introduced the wakes and captured the many reflections on the surface. Painting water is challenging because the mirroring is distorted, and texture, light and color are never uniform.



**Figure 3.** *La Playa Cove*, by Don Young. (24x30)

The next sketch (**Figure 4**) shows a view of the Coronado Bridge from Harbor Island and was created by Marcia Burt, who lives in the Santa Barbara area. She didn't spend much time on it so the picture's success reveals her skill. I like how she builds the bridge with just a single arching brush-stroke and then makes the sun's reflection on the bay with just a few horizontal strokes of white. We see a winter morning with broken storm-clouds, and she quickly gets the effect of sun-versus-storm with alternating grays and golds. She suggests an aircraft carrier effortlessly with a stroke of straight, dark gray. Every time I see those carriers in San Diego Bay I'm impressed by their power. They give this city serious heft.

Here is another view of the bay (**Figure 5**), an intricate layering of boats by Curt Walters, nationally known for his paintings of the Grand Canyon and other western scenes. Some of his works are just spectacular. This painting has several elements I like. One is the way the light filters through the fog. We all know that tension in the San Diego sky when the sun battles the low clouds, piercing them and trying to hold its gains. I like the clutter of masts, shapes and sparkles in the center of the canvas here. It's a busy composition.

In the back of the painting there's a huge, looming tuna seiner. It looks to me disproportional; he possibly over-sized it to catch your eye behind all the other nautical activity. The tuna-boat reminds me of Point Loma in the 1960s and 1970s, when the fishing industry was integral to the economy and community. Boys I knew in grade-school would miss their dads for months at a time; then they'd turn 18 and join the older men on long-haul runs, having their heads shaved when they crossed the Equator. Everything changed, of course, when laws were passed to protect porpoises. I'm glad for those laws but I'm also sentimental for the departed tuna industry. Looking at this painting one could say the shadow of that tuna seiner is a ghost from Point Loma's past.



**Figure 4.** *Light on the Water, from Harbor Island*, by Marcia Burt. (10x18)



**Figure 5.** *Harbor Harmony*, by Curt Walters. (24x24)





**Figure 6.** *Kettner and Hawthorn*, by Jeff Yeomans. (24x30)



**Figure 7.** *Coronado Winter*, by Robert Watts. (12x16)

One of my favorite streets in downtown San Diego is Hawthorn as it travels west toward the bay. In this picture Jeff Yeomans playfully captures the pleasure of that view. Mr. Yeomans is a local talent with a studio in Ocean Beach. His paintings can be seen for sale in local shops and they stand out. I would call him a colorist - he exaggerates colors, or substitutes strong colors for natural tones, to give his pictures vibrancy and light.

The moody picture of Coronado is by Robert Watts. This is painted on a smaller board and is controlled and subdued. It has a thick, ambiguous sky that lacks almost any blue. I like the dunes of Coronado's main beach; they give the place breadth and grandeur. Thank goodness the city didn't sell the dunes for houses. That decision partly compensates for those towers they allowed. Here the focus is a solitary painter with an easel close to the limitless ocean-edge. It's a wintry scene. There's just a bare suggestion of the Hotel Del Coronado.

This sunset over Point Loma (**Figure 8**) was painted on a big canvas by Jian Wang from the Bay Area. I would guess he found a place to paint up on Bankers Hill around 6 p.m. on an autumn day. One of the reasons we like sunsets is the range and intensity of colors that appear at that time. Here the peninsula glows orange where it blocks the setting sun, and the bay radiates reflected light, but in the foreground there are dark shadows, and in the sky we see purples and blues. I think of this artist as a contemporary expressionist. His brush-work looks wild, but when you step back from the canvas, he has captured the moment brilliantly.



**Figure 8.** *Late Afternoon, San Diego Bay*, by Jian Wang. (36x48)

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Let's use this next painting Mr. Watts made of the view north from Mount Soledad to move the conversation up to La Jolla. You can see the suggestion of Scripps Pier on the left, and the way the coast curves out to the northwest. One of the things I like about it is how the aerial perspective is accompanied by longer and longer brush-strokes. You see short strokes and strong colors in the foreground become long strokes and faded colors in the background, and with that transition you come to feel like you're looking all the way to Orange County through the blur of atmosphere.

In *Land of Sunlight* we included an array of coastal scenes by professional and amateur artists. We had many submissions that depicted the beach and cliffs between La Jolla and Del Mar. You see the towering cliffs of Blacks Beach when you look north from La Jolla village. Late in the afternoon the cliffs catch the setting sun and take a crimson glow. When you look at seascapes and landscapes you can often ascertain the time of year and time of day by locating the sun, or if it's not in the picture, the shadows, and reading the colors. The most dramatic paintings exploit the warmth of sunlight early and late in the day. This particular picture is cool, green and geometric, with little orange or red. It might be late-morning in February.



**Figure 9.** *The View from Mount Soledad*, by Robert Watts. (12x16)

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Here (**Figure 10**) we have a view from the opposite direction and closer up. This large canvas is by Mark Kerckhoff, who lives in Orange County. I admire Mr. Kerckhoff's loose and colorful work and his emphasis on natural settings. If you know Torrey Pines Reserve then you'll recognize the view toward La Jolla, with Flat Rock on the right. He didn't put any pines in the painting but captured the vegetation and layers of sandstone beautifully. Look at the orange bands of compressed rock in the promontory. I especially like the sweep of the coast and the power of his ocean with all that whitewater surging toward the Blacks Beach cliffs. He used artistic license to push Point La Jolla way out west. He also omitted people and gives no hint of a town so the picture conveys a sense of historic wilderness.

In this painting we have bright late-morning sun, possibly in August. The shadows tell us the sun is getting high and off to the left; the patches of brown buckwheat indicate the plants have gone to seed. The background is faded out with aerial perspective; even the sky is grayed to keep the emphasis on the foreground. There in the foreground, we have bright and colorful contrast. A range of warm colors reveals the Southern California earth. Upslope, carpets of green Lemonadeberry hug the terrain.



**Figure 10.** *South Trail, Torrey Pines*, by Mark Kerckhoff. (30x40)

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As you travel south from Torrey Pines you can drive past Scripps and catch this scene from the top of the hill (**Figure 11**). It's the most picturesque view in San Diego of Point La Jolla, the village and the Shores. In our book we compared four paintings by four artists from the same perspective. This one is by Curt Walters, whom I discussed earlier. At 48 inches across it's a large painting. The La Jolla he gives us here is placid and rather rich. It might be too sweet for some of you. The water looks Caribbean or Croatian, and the flowers in the foreground are like sprinkles on a cake. This outstanding artist can make "The Jewel" appear perfect.

In the next painting, which is also by Mr. Walters, the colors and textures of the sea and sky are more natural and the work more impressionistic. The previous painting looked south and featured Eucalyptus; this one looks north and features Canary Island Date Palms, which have those long pinnate fronds in a wonderful whorling structure. The strongest light is on the cliff in the foreground as it cuts down to the dark rocks in the tidal zone. You can almost see the shells in the sediments of the cliff. In the background of both pictures you see the red-tile roofs of the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club, a well known institution, and then La Jolla Shores beach, one of the most popular beaches in the county.

When we talk about La Jolla today we have to clarify which part we're referring to. Over the past few decades, with all the activity around UCSD, Torrey Pines Mesa, I-5 and Genesee, the town has expanded dramatically north and east. The Shores may be the epicenter today. Neighborhoods south of the village such as Muirlands and Bird Rock can seem far away.



**Figure 11.** *La Jolla Transcendence*, by Curt Walters. (30x48)



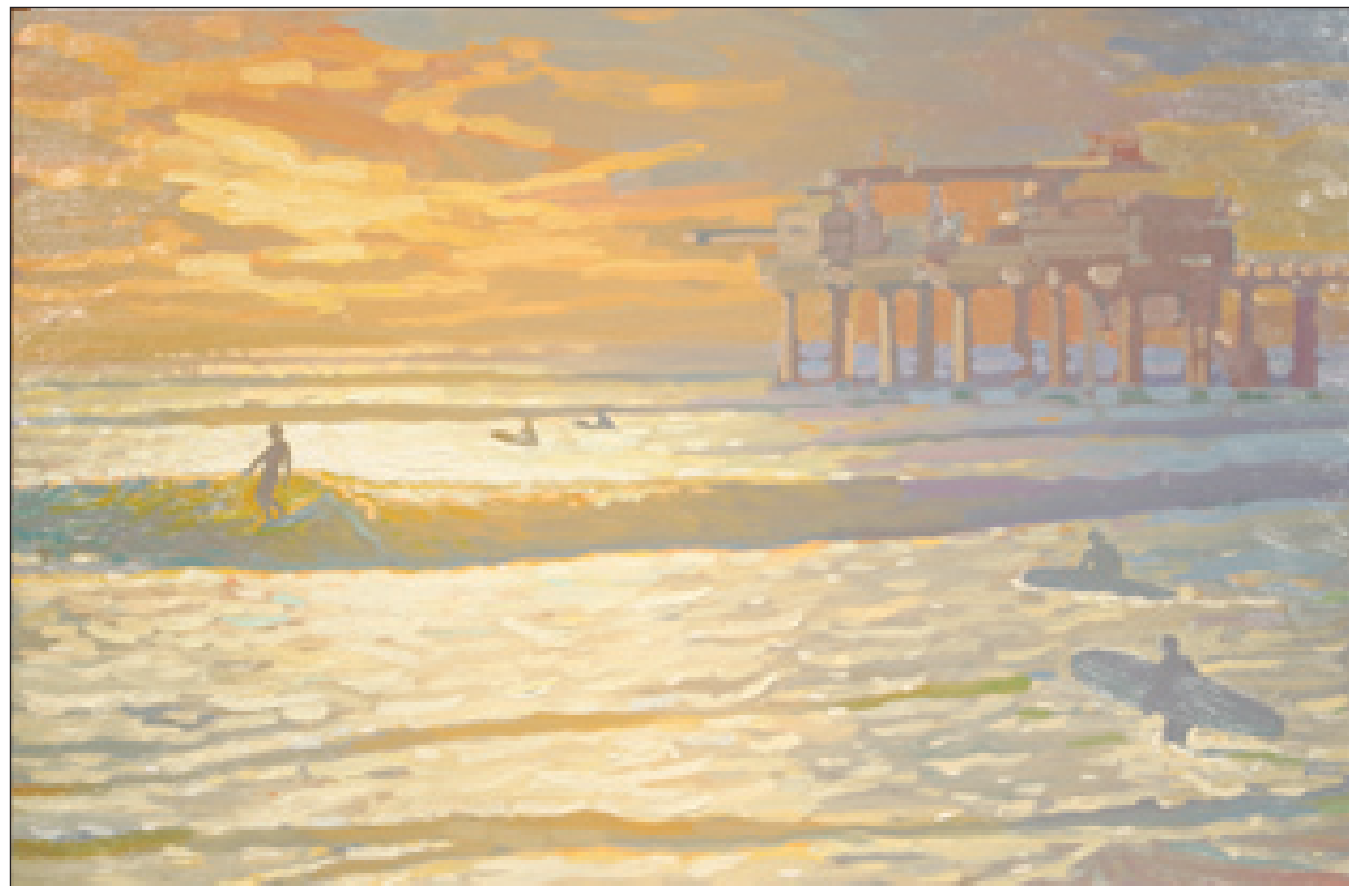
**Figure 12.** *La Jolla Cove View*, by Curt Walters. (30x30)



Here are three sunsets by La Jolla's seashore. The first (**Figure 13**) is by Kevin Short, a colorist who specializes in surfing themes, and depicts late afternoon by Scripps Pier. Mr. Short's whole body of work is a joyful celebration of surfing life. He represents the zeitgeist. As California just named surfing the state sport, he probably sells a lot of paintings. I believe his studio is near San Clemente if you're interested. This particular image has many elements that are his signatures, including a brilliant reflection of sunlight on the ocean, a contrast of cool purples where the light is indirect, translucent waves and casual trimming surfers, and short strong brush-strokes applied with impasto.

The picture of tidepools (**Figure 14**) was painted by David Gallup, a Los Angeles artist who among other accomplishments made a series of paintings of the Channel Islands' marine environment. I like the intensity of the reflected sunlight and the silhouettes he created of people and birds. Everything in shadow is colored rusty orange, yet the figures are realistic and alive. We can smell the salt-air and hear the shorebreak and the voices of the beach-combers.

Finally we have a magnificent sunset at the Children's Pool by Calvin Liang (**Figure 15**). This would be in winter since the sun is setting far to the south and there is wintry surf. It's also high tide; there appears to be no beach. The artist used wide brushes and applied lots of paint. Like the earlier picture with the tuna seiner, this painting makes me nostalgic for the 1970s when locals walked down to the Children's Pool and took leisurely swims protected by the seawall from pounding surf. Now of course the beach is occupied by harbor seals and attracts visitors above who photograph the wildlife. Regrettably it is no longer practical for people to use the beach and swim there. I doubt Mr. Liang knew how times had changed when he made this fine painting.



**Figure 13.** *Golden Horizon*, by Kevin Short. (20x30)



**Figure 14.** *Exploring Tidepools*, by David Gallup. (14x18)



**Figure 15.** *Sunset in La Jolla*, by Calvin Liang. (18x24)



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The painting of La Jolla Cove (**Figure 16**) is by Daryl Millard, who had a studio in Solana Beach for many years but moved to Hawaii. This is a quiet early morning at the Cove before any tourists have made it down there. The scene is idealized with untouched beach and limpid, still water. The focus is the distinctive promontory forming the cove and the fan palms with their delicate string-like stems. Mr. Millard's paintings are readily recognized. He's an expert at palms and skies with colored cumulus clouds - which means he belongs in Hawaii, I suppose. I don't recall seeing figures or cars in any of his paintings. He helps you escape to a calming, natural place.

He is also an expert at painting Eucalyptus, as you can see in this next picture (**Figure 17**). This is my favorite of all the paintings we assembled that feature Eucalyptus. It appears to be a half-rainy winter day at Lake Hodges, looking east toward the mountains. The light is in the background sky and strikes the tops of a few of the trees. The graceful, vertical trees are the main subject but the painting has many layers of depth as most successful landscapes do. There is the hint of a trail in the foreground in the scrub. Then there are the trees, the lake, layers of mountains and the brightening cloud-filled sky. This is a painting you can look at for a long time and return to and enjoy.

This artist consistently uses a subdued palette in his work that calls to mind the tonalists who painted in California in the early 1900s. Most of those artists lived and painted around San Francisco and Monterey where there is fog that mutes the atmosphere, and the colors in the landscape are cooler than our colors here. The tonalists liked early morning and twilight when there wasn't a lot of sunny contrast. They avoided extreme colors and depicted landscapes in soft or hushed hues. Some of them, I believe, tried to convey spiritualism in their work. Daryl's paintings have more color than many old tonalist tableaux, but he may have been influenced by the artists of that time.



**Figure 16.** *La Jolla Cove*, by Daryl Millard. (18x36)

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I should mention, given this artist's interest in Eucalyptus trees, that he has painted many scenes around Rancho Santa Fe, the most elegant rural or semi-rural neighborhood in San Diego County. Rancho Santa Fe is bounded to the east by Lake Hodges, which we see depicted here, and to the west by Interstate 5, placing it only two-plus miles from the ocean. There are around two thousand homes within the boundaries of the neighborhood, which is governed by a homeowners' agreement referred to as the "Covenant". The minimum lot-size for homes in the Covenant is two acres; most residences sit on lots between two and four acres, and some lots are much bigger. It's an ideal neighborhood for people who want space and quiet but do not want to be in the thick of the coastal traffic or so far inland that they feel isolated.

Eucalyptus, which are native in Australia, were planted around Rancho Santa Fe and many parts of California as early as the late-nineteenth century in an effort to produce local timber. Having an interest in botany I have mixed feelings about that effort, which essentially failed - the trees were never seriously harvested for wood. On the one hand the gum trees provide shade today and have an undeniable beauty, as shown here. On the other hand, landscapes with them cannot be said to be pristine. If you long to imagine a pure, uncorrupted place you could conclude they don't belong; you might gain more satisfaction from paintings with native trees like oaks, sycamores, cottonwoods or Torrey Pines. That comment is not meant to fault Mr. Millard. He emigrated from Australia and has remained true to his roots.



**Figure 17.** *After the Rains*, by Daryl Millard. (24x36)

John Asaro, the artist who painted the next two pictures, is over eighty now. He is a godfather of San Diego art, having grown up in Little Italy and Point Loma. I think he lives presently in North County. I am one of his many admirers. He started his career as a commercial artist and gradually developed a unique, breezy style as a colorist. He probably painted this first sketch, of the girl, forty or more years ago. You can see he was influenced by the Spaniard Joaquin Sorolla who painted beach scenes of Valencia in the early 1900s. Mr. Asaro specializes in human figures and makes series of paintings on themes that interest him. Like a contemporary Degas he has done a lot of ballet scenes. Recently he made a series of colorful life-size figures on enormous canvases that couldn't fit inside your home.

This Asaro beach picture (**Figure 19**) is one of my favorites. It is very lively with all the figures, colors and curves. Asaro is a great colorist - look at that mauve background sky. He paints fast and loose and instinctively, laying strong complementary colors in just the right places. It can almost look sloppy until you step back; then it all comes together perfectly.



**Figure 18.** *La Jolla Breeze*, by John Asaro. (18x14)



**Figure 19.** *California Beach Scene*, by John Asaro. (36x36)

This next painting was made by Terry Masters, who knows the desert flora and has painted many desert scenes. I thought that was all Terry did until he revealed this study of breaking waves (**Figure 20**). It shows Mr. Masters' mastery of paint. I like everything about this picture - the colors in the sand, the thin layer of tide in the foreground, the intermittent sunlight, the way he captures moving foam, the blue in the shadows of the swells, the depth of the horizon and that subtle violet line, the layers of clouds and the spots of breaking sky, the way he applied the paint. It's a challenging scene and he depicted it beautifully.

We need to show a painting of Balboa Park. This plein-air study was made by Ken Auster from Laguna Beach, who recently passed away. I watched him once in his studio; he painted fast and confidently. He would use the biggest brush he could for any particular part. You can see that here. He took a wide flat brush and in about five seconds filled in the whole central part of the painting between the Tower of Man and the trees. Then he made the bridge with two or three strokes that pull your eye toward the tunnel. Ken was a marvelous, prolific artist.

The next painting (**Figure 22**) depicts the bridge at the intersection of Park Boulevard and University Avenue at some chilly, foggy, uncrowded, uncertain time. It might be 6:00 a.m. on a May-gray morning. The lines and curves make interesting geometry here, and I like the spots of light that show through the fog. This was created by Wade Cline, an experienced artist who has depicted many interesting, overlooked scenes of urban San Diego.



**Figure 20.** *Wave's Last Crunch*, by Terry Masters. (20x24)



**Figure 21.** *Welcome to Balboa Park*, by Ken Auster. (16x20)



**Figure 22.** *Last Foggy Bridge*, by Wade Cline. (18x24)

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This next painting (**Figure 23**) presents an unusual perspective of the western-most point of the border. The border is a defining feature of our geography. You see here a curious juxtaposition of the Tijuana Bullring opposing one of the Coronado Islands in the background. The island recedes with expert aerial perspective. More than half the picture is a uniform mid-day sky. The artist, William Glen Crooks, likes to paint big skies. Mr. Crooks' body of work is a local treasure-trove. He has lived for decades in Imperial Beach and paints ordinary scenes with results that are subtle wonders. The County of San Diego acquired a few of his large canvases for its new offices in Kearny Mesa; someone at the County appreciates art.

Here is another big-sky painting (**Figure 24**) that he made looking across the Tijuana River Estuary at the south end of I.B. That must be Point Loma in the background. I'm not sure if it's sunrise or twilight but the moon has an intense solar glow; it rather looks like the sun, except if it was the sun you could not look at it. Tiny reflections of light are caught on the buildings; fan-palms rise above the low-lying town. There's a looming marine layer and the colors



**Figure 23.** *Bullring by the Sea*, by William Glen Crooks. (24x30)

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of the sky are cool and mysterious. The glassy, winding river reflects a range of colors of light. There's something magical about this fine painting.

Glen's representational work can look so real that you do a double-take, but his subject matter is never tourist-sights. One reason I like his work so much is that he finds strange beauty where most people don't look. And he sees from angles we don't see. His pictures have an extra-terrestrial quality, as if humanity is an afterthought. He has a planetary perspective.

He also paints thin on the canvas. Many of the artists whose work we've looked at like to show their brush-work and to see and touch the texture of the paint. Crooks is different. Any depth you see is entirely an illusion.

I'd like to show two more paintings by Mr. Crooks. This one (**Figure 25**) is a back-country scene near Alpine with intense reflections of sunlight on a house and three street-signs. Look in particular at the glare he achieves on the sign at far left. The artist expertly imitates the sun. Sometimes when you look at his pictures you have to avert your eyes.



**Figure 24.** *Moon Over the Estuary*, by William Glen Crooks. (48x60)



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## Back-Country Paintings

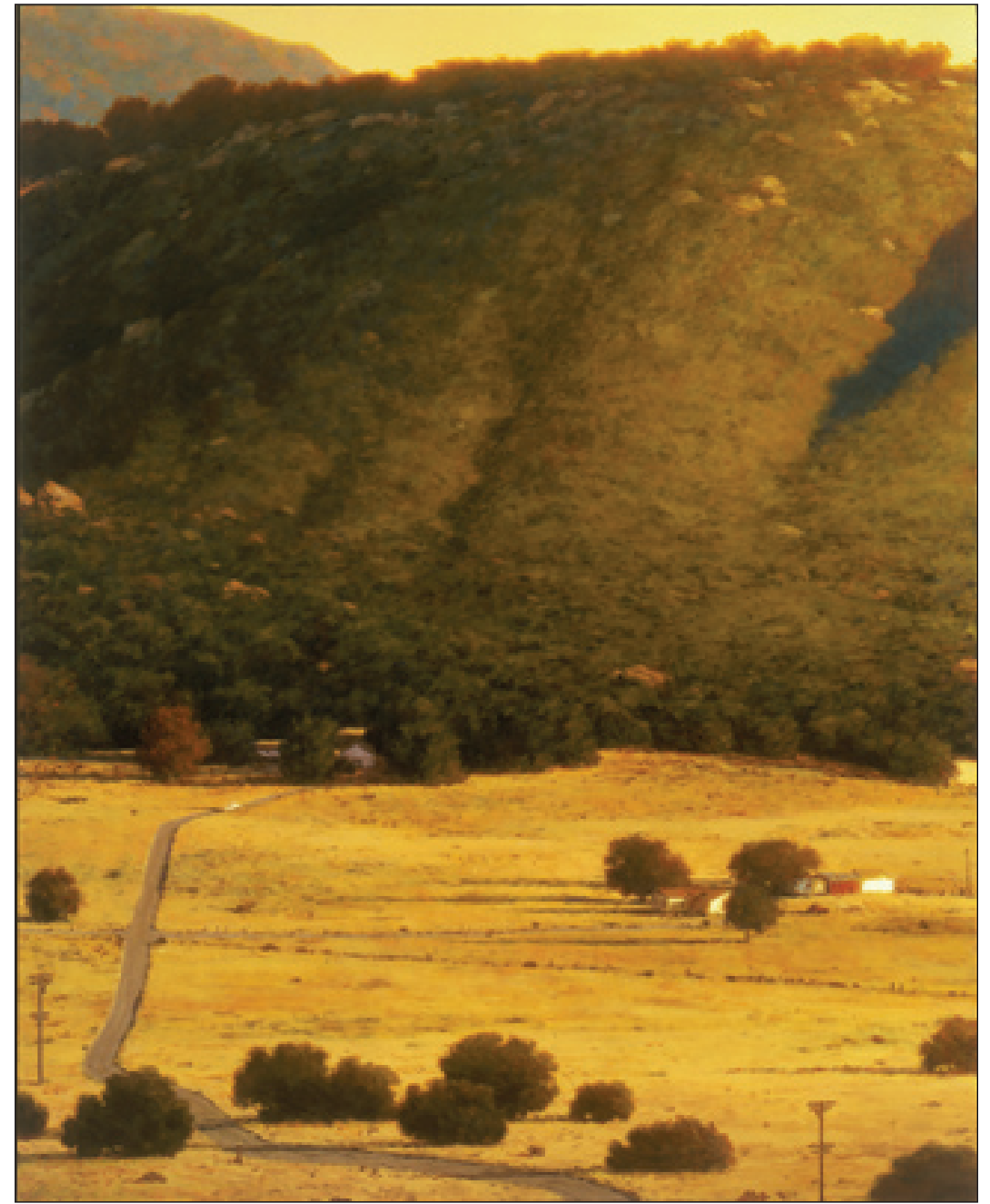
One reason I wanted to include this last painting of Mr. Crooks' is that the sky in it is almost totally obscured by land. It's just a sliver of gold at the top of the frame. So we can say he likes big skies and he also likes big land. This looks like an early summer-morning in the Palomar Mountains; or maybe it's near Potrero. Everything is bathed in gold. The snaking road is off-center and takes your eye back to a little gabled house hidden in an oak woodland. The oaks are giant but in the context of the painting they look miniscule. There's a lone car that casts a long shadow. The wild, chaparral-covered mountain rises up to the glowing sky. Here again we see his genius conveying the scale of a huge and lonely, mysterious landscape.

Representational artists choose their subjects for different reasons. We can't know for sure what those reasons are, unless they are commissions. Most artists, I suspect, are drawn to familiar scenes and are content with the technical challenges of conveying them accurately. I would say about Crooks' work that he's up to something different. There are original ideas as well as skill behind his compositions. His paintings have messages. Since he doesn't explain them it's up to each viewer to decide what the messages are.

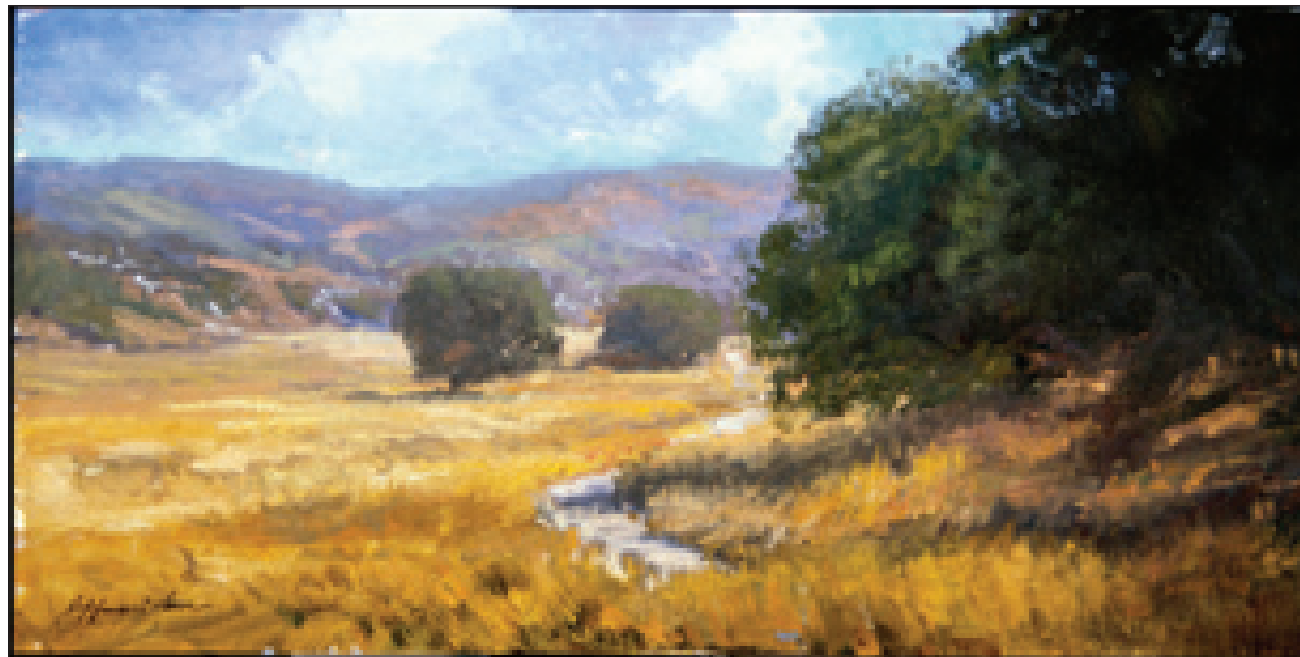
Orange County artist Jeffrey Horn is a veteran painter and teacher who has a fine sense of Southern California's natural colors. He has taught some of today's best landscape painters and for a while gave summer-classes at Warner's Ranch near Lake Henshaw. This plein-air



**Figure 25.** *Silence Before Thunder*, by William Glen Crooks. (48x72)



**Figure 26.** *Strength in the Land*, by William Glen Crooks. (60x48)



**Figure 27.** *August Gold*, by Jeff Horn. (12x24)



**Figure 28.** *Santa Ysabel Farm*, by Phil Starke. (22x28)

painting of a valley near Warner's (**Figure 27**) gives you an idea of Mr. Horn's talent. The horizontal elements - the swirling sky, colorful mountains, live-oak trees and grassy golden valley - are intersected by an inviting, empty trail. I like the way Jeff represents oaks. This painting is loose and rich and good for a back-country reverie.

The picture with the white horse (**Figure 28**) depicts a farm near Santa Ysabel where the mountains rise steeply. This was painted by Phil Starke from Arizona, who has created a number of peaceful rural scenes in the mountains around Julian and whose work is always appealing. I like the light on the horse's mane and the zigzag of the valley as it climbs up toward the peak. All the green suggests late winter or spring. The red in the trees might depict new growth. The artist uses that red to create harmony with the colorful shed and barn.

The next slide (**Figure 29**) depicts Santa Ysabel between Ramona and Julian and was painted by William Hook, a nationally known artist who paints all around the West. The Santa Ysabel Valley was rich agriculturally even in Spanish times. In Charles Parry's 1849 journal he wrote that Santa Ysabel had "an abundance of luscious grapes,...peaches...pears and even ap-



**Figure 29.** *Descending Clouds*, by William Hook. (36x40)



**Figure 30.** *Crows at Mataguay*, by Adele Earnshaw. (11x14)



**Figure 31.** *Volcan Territory*, by Joe Garcia. (20x24)

ples...which with melons fit us out amply in the fruit line." After Americans took it over the valley was given to livestock grazing, like the Warner Ranch, and we still see cattle today around the little town. In the painting there are open fields and pastures surrounded by gentle hills, oak savanna, and low clouds catching sun from above. Santa Ysabel has much open woodland with graceful, spreading Engelmann Oaks. All the elements are in this fine work.

This little painting by Adele Earnshaw (**Figure 30**) has an interesting perspective. You feel like you're laying down in the high brush looking at that powerline with the crows perched on it. The dense foreground is out of focus, and the background is a misty mountainous blur. There's just that narrow band of activity getting all your attention and focus, which is actually how you see when you look at open views.

Joe Garcia's painting (**Figure 31**) shows a Red-tailed Hawk, another large bird common in our region. Mr. Garcia is an accomplished wildlife-artist living in the Julian area. He is especially adept at painting birds. I like the feeling of freedom that soaring raptors convey. I also like this painting's reminder that San Diego County occasionally receives snow. Volcan Mountain is a wild and diverse peak, half in the desert and half cismontane.

The watercolor with the voids and the charred tree (**Figure 32**) was painted by James Hubbell, who is now nearing ninety and lives outside Julian. Mr. Hubbell has been a unique contributor to San Diego County's art scene for decades. You may have seen his innovative public art at diverse locations like Shelter Island and the Volcan Mountain Preserve. He has brought a bit of Big Sur free-thinking to our traditionally conservative region, especially with his sculptures and architectural ideas. I included this watercolor as a poignant reminder of the



**Figure 32.** *Fallen Tree, Wynola*, by James Hubbell.



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last decade's wildfires. He painted it in 2004, after the first devastating fire swept through the Cuyamaca Mountains. We see here a blackened tree and burnt hills, and in the far distance there's a continuing raging blaze. The symbolic circle indicates emptiness to me but also that life will come around again. This picture is desolate and colorful at the same time.

The artist who painted the Old Mission Dam (**Figure 33**) is Pat Kelly. The artist whom Ms. Kelly placed in the picture looks just like Pat. The picture depicts an important site in San Diego history, where the Franciscans in the early 1800s first engineered a dam on the San Diego River to gain a reliable source for the mission's crops. It is a reminder of the importance of the river, which carries scarce water and creates lush riparian micro-environments. I like how she painted the willows and sycamores. This painting celebrates her lifelong passion for art.

Pat is an excellent artist and a wonderful person. She happens to be the first teacher I had for a pure painting-class, some twenty years ago. She was teaching oil painting and plein-air painting for the Athenaeum in La Jolla. I had been drawing all my life but had never used oil paints and canvases. Pat introduced the materials and showed me the basics of the medium and brushes. I will always be grateful for her patience with us beginners.

Another fine artist and teacher who helped me learn is Ken Goldman. Mr. Goldman lives



**Figure 33.** *Old Padre Dam*, by Pat Kelly. (24x30)

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and works in a studio near the mouth of the San Diego River in Point Loma. He is a talented professional who is devoted to his craft and paints well in any medium - oils, acrylics, watercolors, pastels. Like Pat, Ken has given classes to hundreds of aspiring local artists. Like most of the artists I'm mentioning today, he paints commissions and has sold scores of his works.

In this colorful work (**Figure 34**) we have another perspective of the San Diego River, the waterway at the heart of our city's history. You all know the mouth of the river where it divides Ocean Beach from Sea World and Mission Beach. It is worthwhile to try to follow the river back up to its source at Cuyamaca Lake. You pass through Mission Valley to Santee and Lakeside, then quickly start climbing into steep and rugged mountains. Some of the canyons and waterfalls up there are remarkable. The San Diego River Conservancy and its supporters deserve recognition for their efforts to preserve and protect that important resource.

Learning to paint well takes decades for most artists, but if you are deeply interested in paintings, I'd recommend you try making them. I did not much understand art until I'd practiced painting for some time. In *Land of Sunlight* we included a few early pictures I had made because they depicted parts of the county where professional artists rarely if ever went. I am still learning to paint and to see in fine paintings how creators think and work.



**Figure 34.** *San Diego River*, by Ken Goldman. (24x48; excerpt)



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The next two paintings were made by Pat Sean Sullivan. She's a skilled, thought-provoking local artist who has mastered difficult techniques. I believe she and William Glen Crooks are old acquaintances; you see some similarities in their subject matter and the way they paint intense reflected light. I don't recall seeing a figure in any of Ms. Sullivan's paintings. She creates moody, mysterious landscapes. To be truthful I don't know exactly how she achieves the effects she gets on canvas. Probably she does multiple glazes of thin oily paint, which takes patience and a fine touch. In any case the results can be mesmerizing.

This first scene (**Figure 35**) occurs at sunset, I think, and has been transformed into a volcanic fantasy. It depicts mountains and open country around Pine Valley near the artist's home, but while the oaks and terrain look real it's about the glowing light not the place. The molten mountains are sandwiched between an ominous dark sky and a shadowy valley. The topography is pulsing, eerily fascinating.

The second scene shows a night sky (**Figure 36**). I like to see how artists paint the night and where they find sources of light. This painting is also enigmatic. There's a feeling of surrealism - maybe science fiction - with that giant moon and the constellations. The foreground earth is nearly black, while the city in the background emanates artificial light. The natural sky with all its cosmology dominates the glowing battery of man-made activity.



**Figure 35.** *Winter Light*, by Pat Sean Sullivan. (30x40)

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The next painting, of the desert (**Figure 37**; page 32), is of course more traditional than what we see from Ms. Sullivan. This beautiful scene was created by John Modesitt, of Solana Beach. Mr. Modesitt has perfected a style similar to early California impressionists like Maurice Braun and Guy Rose. This appears to me to depict the flats near Coyote Mountain just north of Borrego Springs. Soft, late-day sun illuminates the mountain with warm pastel orange or pink. The shadows on the mountain are light purple. The foreground is patches of pink Sand Verbena, one of the common wildflowers that appear in spring. Our eyes have a path through the sand to follow. You can see why impressionism has endured through the decades.

I'll close the presentation today with a gigantic painting by Christopher Gerlach (**Figure 38** - inside back cover) of a startling desert sky that we also used for the back of *Land of Sunlight*. Mr. Gerlach grew up in San Diego and lives in Colorado now, I believe. Four-fifths of this enormous canvas is sky. He highlights the clouds' edges with strong light from the hidden sun. The sky above the clouds is bright blue but the land is trapped in shadows. It looks like there is thunder over the mountains in the distant background, and the storm is on the move. His foreground is barren scrub. This painting represents to me great swaths of the American West.

Thank you for listening.

\* \* \*



**Figure 36.** *Night Flight*, by Pat Sean Sullivan. (13x21)



**Figure 37.** *Borrego Springs Verbena*, by John Modesitt. (30x20)

“Winds from the Sea and from the Desert met and had a duel...  
I made some pretty good sketches on that trip, as it was a beautiful spot.”

Charles Fries’ memoirs, of a 1929 camping trip in San Diego County.



**Figure 38.** *Spirit Winds, Borrego Desert*, by Christopher Gerlach. (60x84)

# LAND OF SUNLIGHT

Contemporary Paintings of San Diego County

Featuring 100 Fine Artists

## PAINTINGS

FROM THE

## LAND OF SUNLIGHT

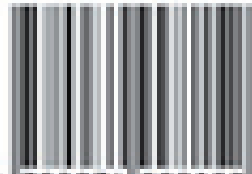
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