



The Portuguese Bend Artist Colony pictured, standing, Dan Pinkham, Rick Humphrey, Tom Redfield, Kevin Prince, and sitting, Vicki Pinkham, Steve Mirich, and Amy Sidraire

# 'In defense of beauty'

by Mark McDermott

Leave it to a group of painters to pick a landslide area as a place to make their stand.

A painter's gift, after all, has less to do with common sense and more to do with the possession of uncommon audacity. It is a trait that confers an ability to escape the humdrum confines of the temporal world: the artist takes transience and makes something that lasts, giving us all eyes for beauty.

So perhaps it should come as little surprise that a home in the Portuguese Bend slide area, where four decades ago dozens of houses slid towards the ocean and their destruction, is the hub around which a group of seven painters are trying to build a lasting legacy. The home belongs to painters Dan and Vicki Pinkham and the group is the Portuguese Bend Artist Colony. They are a group of plein-air painters whose common purpose, aptly described by Irvine Museum Director Jean Stern, is to do far more than "just to paint pretty pictures."

The group is making a stand on behalf of the land they are painting. They are working towards the preservation of the Portuguese Bend area not only within a body of artistic work - one that will one day be housed in a

The work of the Portuguese Bend Artist Colony will be preserved for generations to come when Dan and Vicki Pinkham's house becomes a museum. The question now is how much of Portuguese Bend itself will be preserved.

museum in what is now the Pinkham's home - but also in a much more direct, immediate sense. Since 1997, the artists have held an annual art show benefiting the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, a community group whose mission is to preserve the peninsula's remaining wild beauty.

This year's art show, which opens June 25 at the Malaga Cove Library, comes at the most important point in the history of the Land Conservancy. The elements are in place for a monumental conservation deal that would create a 1500-acre Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve: two developers are in negotiations

with the PVPLC to sell parcels totaling 600 acres of land; the city of Palos Verdes has agreed to make a gift of the coastal areas encompassing Abalone and Inspiration Points; land near the landside is available at very low prices; and matching dollars are available from state and federal conservation funds that would cover 75 percent of the \$30 million in total acquisition costs.

The catch is that a significant part of the deal has to come together in less than 100 days. The Conservancy needs \$4 million by Sept. 15 in order to meet the deadline set by developer Barry Hon, who three years ago agreed to sell land on which he had originally intended to build a golf course. Thus far, only \$1.2 million has been raised towards that goal.

Hon has made no secret of his impatience. As he noted in a short documentary made by the Conservancy, he is 66 years old and wants the issue settled before he dies. "We are getting antsy, frankly," he said. "If this deal does not happen soon, we are going to move on."

A sign on Hon's desk said all that needs to be said about his disposition regarding the slow-moving deal. "Happiness," it said, "is a positive cash flow."

