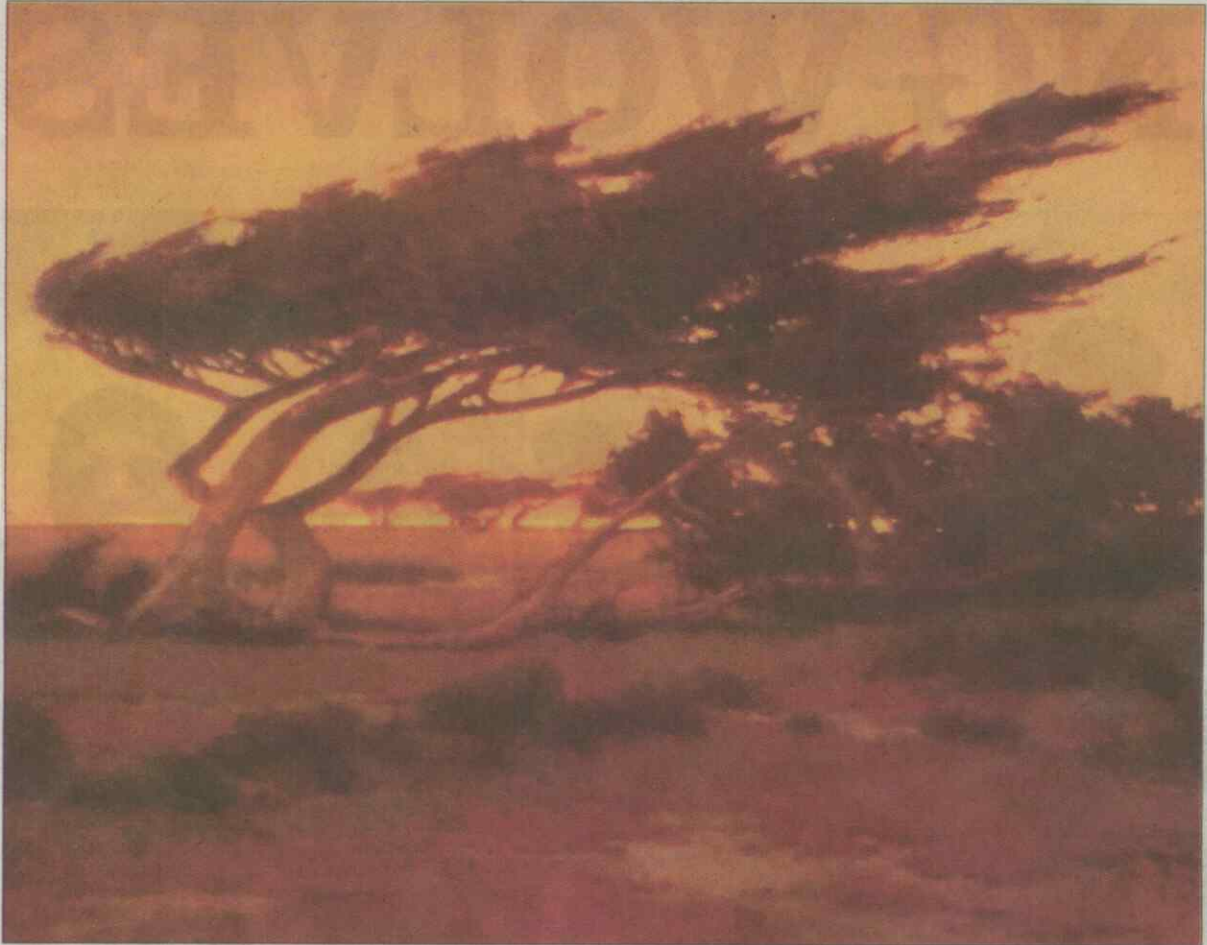


ARTS & BOOKS

ON VIEW



Images from California Art Club

CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION: "Windblown Cypress, Pebble Beach" by Brian Blood.

A gold mark for artists' cohesion

A century ago, the California Art Club was launched by a handful of European émigrés and plucky Americans who decided to make creativity their calling. In those days, being an artist was not so fashionable, but the founders included many now considered the greats of early California art such as Franz Bischoff, Hanson Puthuff and William Wendt.

Today, the club's emphasis on representational style and academic subject matter (landscapes, still lifes, portraits) may be thought stodgy, but realism may be having something of a resurgence. The club, celebrating the centenary of its Gold Medal Juried Exhibition, is filling the galleries of the Pasadena Museum of California Art through April 24 with 200 selected works from 150 of its members (all the works are for sale).

Artist Peter Adams and his wife, Elaine, a former stockbroker, took over in 2003. Membership is now at 2,200, with seven branches and two to come, says executive director Elaine.

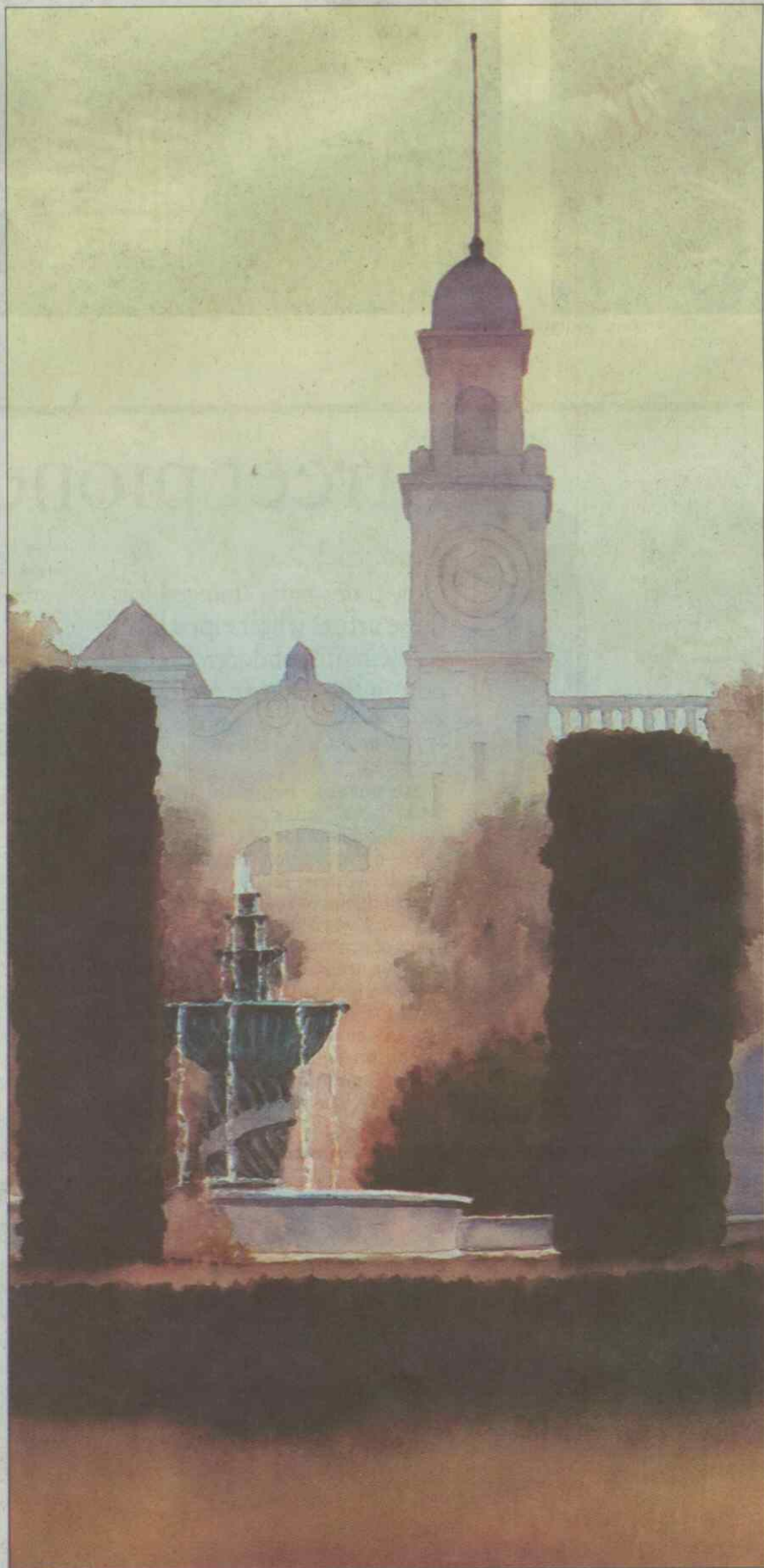
"We felt there wasn't a community of artists in the traditional fine arts," she says in the library of the club, headquartered in an old house off Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena. "We found that a lot of knowledge was disappearing. We wanted to educate people and get them excited about traditional fine art." Now they have talks, lectures and workshops and put together some 20 exhibitions a year.

What drives the club today? Adams says it's the camaraderie of meetings and of "paint outs," in which members meet outdoors to work side by side. They're also united by a love for the state's natural environment.

"The California landscape is one of the most beautiful in the world," says Jean Stern, one of the exhibition judges and executive director of the Irvine Museum. He also co-wrote the new Rizzoli book "California Light: A Century of Landscapes," about paintings by club members.

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REALISM: "Fountain, Sonoma Plaza" by Michael Reardon is one of 200 works from members of the California Art Club on display in Pasadena.