

ART

California Art Club exhibits traditional works

By Sandra Barrera

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For the California Art Club, nothing beats traditional fine art. The 105-year-old organization showcases some of its finest examples of representational work with a show open through April 20 at the Autry National Center in Griffith Park.

Dubbed the 103rd Annual Gold Medal Juried Exhibition, the event builds on the legacy of time-honored techniques in drawing, painting and sculpting that have been passed down through the ages, but in a modern context.

"It's not replicating the past," says Elaine Adams, who runs American Legacy Fine Arts Gallery in Pasadena and volunteers as executive director and CEO of the California Art Club. "It's being able to express themselves as artists in realistic forms."

With no particular theme to guide the artists, the works are rich and varied — often reflecting the world around.

Farmworkers are a popular subject for Monterey-based painter Warren Chang, whose "Lunch Break: Homage to Pyle" shows a group of men plopped down on the very field they work on for a quick bite to eat. The scene is a reference to one by late 19th century illustrator Howard Pyle, which shows pirates divvying up their loot on the sand.

In "Morning Light, Pt. Lobos," Pebble Beach-based painter Brian Blood creates a sense of discovery.

"You're coming through a dark, almost imprisonment with trees that are creating bars," Adams says. "Through the openings is this beautiful expanse of sunshine and coastal area."

Scott W. Prior captures the

gritty underground of Los Angeles in his plein air painting "Under the 7th Street Bridge" with its graffiti-tagged walls and rows of train tracks.

"What he does to get these paintings is actually dangerous and disgusting," Adams says. "He has to deal with a drug element and people who have mental issues and filth. But he is documenting what he sees."

These artists' contemporary-traditional fine art paintings were identified as top-notch by a jury panel of museum curators from the Norton Simon Museum, Autry, The Irvine Museum and Oceanside Museum of Art. Out of about 700 entries, more than 200 works were selected.

During the exhibition's run, the California Art Club will present educational programs such as a Roaring '20s-themed "Paint-Out/Sculpt-Out" from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 13. Program information will be posted online at www.californiaartclub.org.

"We want to draw in people from all over the world that will come together with this philosophy of maintaining traditional techniques," says Adams, who joined her husband, artist Peter Adams, in reviving the California Art Club in 1993 when it was a hobbyist group.

Today, the nonprofit is one of the largest and most active art organizations in the nation — and it's growing.

Adams says it's good news for traditional fine art.

"We were about to go back to the dark ages and would have had to re-learn all those skills," she says. "But in my 20 years with the California Art Club, the quality of the artwork has immensely improved. It's exciting to see artists are now doing incredible work using these traditional techniques."



"Morning Light, Pt. Lobos," oil painting by Brian Blood



"Lunch Break: Homage to Pyle," oil painting by Warren Chang

103RD ANNUAL GOLD MEDAL JURIED EXHIBITION

When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, through April 20.

Where: Autry National Center, 4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles.

Admission: \$4-\$10.

Information: 323-667-2000, <http://theautry.org>.