



**Best of Show, "Engine 29"
by Laura Wambsgans.**

ART

2023 TEHACHAPI

***Capturing the
community
an plein air***

by Pat Doody

If the quality of art displayed at the July Art 2023 Tehachapi show is any indication, Tehachapi is fast becoming a, "destination for representational fine artists and collectors." This has been the mission of the Tehachapi Arts Commission since its inception in 2019.

The Commission grew out of the Art of Healing Committee that was responsible for locating and acquiring artwork for the then-new Adventist Health Tehachapi Hospital. The committee was originally made up of local sculptor Dwight Dreyer, local artist Donald Towns and one-time gallery owner Jim Wilson. Their goal was to raise community awareness of the value of art as a positive and uplifting influence to the community. Starting as an affiliate committee of the Greater Tehachapi Economic Development Council, the Commission has grown to seven members and became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2023. The first show in 2021 attracted national media attention bringing sponsorships from

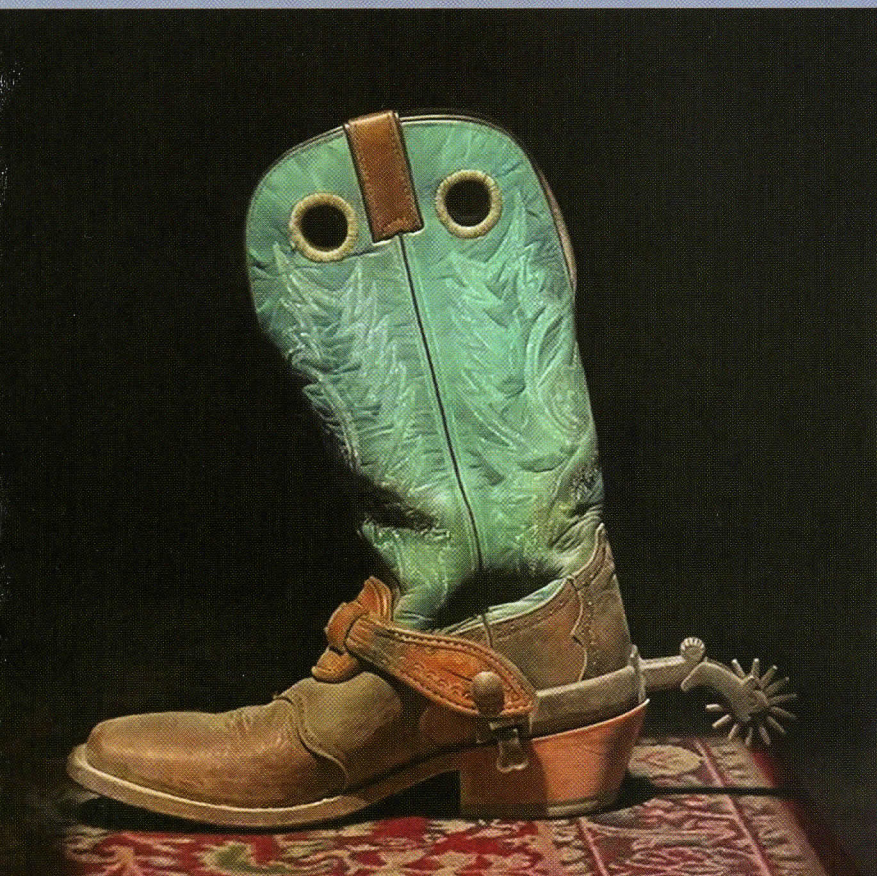
both Western Art Collector and American Art Collector magazines.

In May 2023, the Tehachapi Arts Commission held its third “en plein air” paint-out, attended by 42 artists from all over the country. Most of them were returning to Tehachapi for the third time. Plein air artists are those who gather up their paints, palette, canvas and easel and head into the countryside to capture the effects of light on the landscape. As with the two previous paint-outs in 2021 and 2022, the artists attended a kick-off event held at Dorner Family Vineyard where they learned about the event and special painting venues that would be available to them for the weekend. They began their paintings and sketches over the weekend and completed their finished works in their studios. The works were then juried into the Art 2023 show that

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Best Urban Painting, “Like a Summer Day, Villa la Paz” by Nikita Budkov.



Best Still Life, “The Milano Boot” by Otto Sturcke.



Best Landscape, “Winter Sunset and Wind Turbines” by Peter Adams.

**Photos supplied by
Tehachapi Arts
Commission**

was later held in Tehachapi in July.

This year the artists were offered a new venue opportunity to paint. They were invited to spend a day on the Milano Ranch in Stallion Springs hosted by Mark and Jessie Milano. The Milano Ranch was once owned by actor Jack Palance. The ranch visit gave the artists an opportunity to paint on a working cattle ranch. The big red barn and the old adobe stagecoach station located on the property added additional fodder for their imagination. They also had the opportunity, for the third year in a row, to visit Oak Creek Canyon with Tehachapi's herd of wild horses. It has become a favorite place for them to paint. Some of the artists had already spotted their own favorite locations, discovered during the paint-outs in 2021 and 2022.

The artists returned to Tehachapi on the weekend of July 21-23 to display their work. All of the final paintings for the show had been shipped to Tehachapi in advance to be hung prior to the Friday evening opening. The VIP reception allowed the artists to meet the show sponsors and speak with collectors, who had come from all over California, while sampling hors d'oeuvres and drinks from an open bar. All of the ticket sales raised at the opening event will be used to fund the casting of a bronze statue featuring a young female skateboarder. The completed statue will be installed at the headquarters of the Tehachapi Valley Recreation and Park District, near Ollie Mountain Skate Park, and is planned to be the first work in an Art in the Parks series sponsored by the Tehachapi Arts Commission.

The 2023 Best of Show was awarded to California artist Laura Wambsgans for her painting "Engine 29," a vintage engine chugging through the Tehachapi Valley. Best Urban Painting was awarded to Nikita Budkov for "Like a Summer Day, Villa La Paz." This was Budkov's first trip to Tehachapi. Best Still Life was

awarded to Otto Sturcke for "The Milano Boot," a nearly photographic image of a stunning teal cowboy boot. "Winter Sunset and Wind Turbines" by famed artist Peter Adams was awarded the Best Landscape. Laura Wambsgans, who has been part of the show since its beginning, was selected to be the featured artist for Art 2024.

During the weekend, 27 of the artists sold 41 paintings and four of the artists sold all of their work. Over 500 visitors attended the show during the weekend.

The total of sales for the weekend was \$117,500, surpassing the 2022 show.

Planning for Art 2024 began before the close of Art 2023. The artists will be back in Tehachapi the week of May 9, 2024 to begin the paintings that will be exhibited in July. The Art 2024 VIP Opening Exhibition and Sale will be Friday, July 19, 2024 and the public show will be July 20-21, 2024. Save the date and plan to attend what has become one of the premier west coast art shows, Art 2024 Tehachapi. ■



Award winners: (from left) Otto Sturcke, Laura Wambsgans, Peter Adams and Nikita Budkov.



The Tehachapi Arts Commission: (from left) Donald Towns, Dwight Dreyer, Laura Dreyer, Sally Lawrence, Jim Wilson, Jeanette Pauer and Pat Doody.