

Bodega Bay Heritage Gallery Monthly

News, Articles, and Opinions from the world of California's Heritage Art

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Linda Sorensen & Daniel Rohlfing, proprietors.

"The hidden harmony is better than the obvious."

Pablo Picasso

Thelma Speed Houston 1914 - 2000

Thelma Speed Houston will be center stage in May at a retrospective exhibition hosted by the Vista Art Gallery in Vista, California, about 35 miles north of San Diego.

The exhibition is the brainchild of a television star, Ken Jenkins, who plays Dr. Kelso on "Scrubs." Jenkins began collecting the works of Thelma Speed Houston several years ago. His enthusiasm for Thelma's work soon led him to Kene Lohmann, grand-nephew of Thelma, and together they chose Thelma's adopted hometown of Vista, California for this exhibition.

Thelma Speed Houston was a master watercolor artist for fifty-one years. Her work exudes a magical blend her talent, her robust style, and a hearty laugh. She was known for bold sweeping strokes and she is remembered by her students for laughing while she painted. Thelma taught art at Palomar College and other venues in North San Diego County.

Thelma's style is of the "California Style" or "California Movement" of watercolors



April Painting of the Month
"Cathedral," Thelma Speed Houston, 1914 - 2000
Watercolor 21 1/2 x 29 1/2
Retrospective Exhibition: Vista Village Art Gallery
Vista, California ... www.vistaartfoundation.org

popularized during the WPA period of the 1930's and made famous by Disney artists. Sheets, Phil Dike, Emil Kosa and Paul Sample.

The California Style of watercolor painting emerged in the 1920's and remained until the mid 1950's. This bold style of representational art is defined by its bold strokes and rich colors. The subject matter were most often scenes of everyday life on the Pacific Coast, and included industrial scenes, beaches and working harbors, and vast open landscapes and cityscapes.

The California Style was most defined by a group of young artists in the 1930's, most from the Chouinard Art Institute, including Millard

Thelma loved travel, painting scenes of varied places she visited, including many scenes of Northern California and of Maui. She was a member of the Laguna Beach Art Association and is listed in "California Watercolors 1850 - 1970, An Illustrated History and Biographical Dictionary" by Gordon T. McClelland and Jay T. Last.

Thelma was born in the Bronx, and was a graduate of the Pratt Institute of Fine and Applied Art. She worked in textiles, and was a designer and colorist for St. Andrews Textile Company in New York.

Log onto: <http://www.BBHGallery.com>

"If only we could pull out our
brain and use only our eyes."

Pablo Picasso

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Linda & Dan's Exhibition Excursion to S. California

Recently, Linda and Dan visited the southland and attended five notable exhibitions.

First up was the "Painters of the Desert: the Arid West" at the Wilding Museum in Los Olivos, near Solvang north of Santa Barbara. The exhibit was small, but would have been the pride more prestigious big city museums. The works included dazzling early 20th century paintings of Maynard Dixon, Conrad Buff, Victor Forsythe, and Jimmy Swinnerton. These artists captured a beauty and spirit of the Southwest, long before air conditioners, huge cities and freeways. The exhibit has now ended, but we encourage you to think anew of the desert by seeing the works of painters who saw it and preserved it long ago.

Next up was the "Who Was Sam? The Art of Sam Hyde Harris 1889 - 1977," exhibit at the Pasadena Museum of History.

The exhibit focused on his extensive and successful commercial art and famous landscapes of Southern California artist, Sam Hyde Harris.

As a commercial artist, Sam produced many labels and posters. His most recognizable work was done for the Sante Fe Railroad, with stylized art deco trains racing through western scenery, scenes well received by Easterners yearning

to head west.

Sam's landscape paintings exhibit his love of light and atmospheric effects. His scenes preserve the open and uncongested Southern California of his era.

His later work was influenced by desert artist James Swinnerton. During this period, he painted in the Palm Springs area, and his pallet changed to more earth tones, in part because the rich colors he had used before the war, crimson, orange, blue and purple were prohibitively expensive during the war.

Sam was well liked and had some notable artist friends as well, including Hanson Puthuff, Edgar Payne, and Jean Mannheim. He located his studio in Alhambra, with some notable artist neighbors; Jack Wilkinson Smith, Clyde Forsythe, Eli Harvey, and Frank Tenney Johnson. Norman Rockwell was a regular summertime visitor to this small Alhambra artist colony. Most enjoyable for Sam was teaching, on which he focused most of his energies later in his life.

The exhibit at the Pasadena History Museum runs through April 29th. (www.PasadenaHistory.org)

Linda and Dan also viewed the California Watercolor Exhibit at the Pasadena Art Museum, the Colin Cooper Campbell exhibit at the Laguna Beach Art Museum, and the "Peaceful Awakening, Spring in California" exhibit at the Irvine Museum, featuring the works of many early California painters. They also visited many galleries in the Laguna Beach area.

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"The profession of book
writing makes horse racing
seem like a solid and stable
business."

John Steinbeck

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To be (a Gallery) or not to be (a Gallery)?

That is the question ... now facing Linda and Dan.

They began as an "on-line" enterprise. Their efforts focused on the acquisition, research and internet presentation of their gallery.

But one of their goals is making California Art accessible, so people may more easily see and enjoy the collection. Establishing a well lighted and well located gallery would go a long way in meeting that goal.

Linda and Dan would love to hang their shingle in Bodega Bay, but retail space is extremely rare along the coast. They are willing to consider locales a bit further inland. If you have any inspired suggestions of prime gallery locations or any "lightening bolt" ideas, please contact them at ...

707-875-9287

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"I begin with an idea and then
it becomes something else."

"Art washes away from the
soul the dust of everyday
life."

Pablo Picasso

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