



CASA ROMANTICA

CULTURAL CENTER AND GARDENS



Gems of California Impressionism

James Irvine Swinden

Family Collection

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens





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Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens

curated by James Irvine Swinden

March 21 – June 15, 2025

in the Casa Art Gallery

Underwritten by the Traditional Fine Arts Organization

<< *Opposite: Anna Hills, 'By the Roadside Near El Torro', 14 x10 inches, oil on canvas*
Cover: Guy Rose 'Incoming Tide', 24 x 29 inches, oil on canvas

About California Impressionism

California Impressionism and California Plein Air Painting describe the artists who worked outdoors in California (the French Impressionists, who described this method as ‘en plein air,’ coined the term internationally) beginning in the late nineteenth century. Their work became popular in Southern and Northern California in the early twentieth century and is a regional variation on American Impressionism.

Their paintings depicted the natural California landscape — the foothills, mountains, seashores, and deserts of the interior and coastal regions. California Impressionism reached its popularity in the years before the Great Depression. The California Plein Air Painters generally painted in a bright, chromatic palette with “loose” painterly brushwork that showed some influence from both French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

Although the California landscape has changed in many ways, artists still practice this style today as a way to pay homage to the masters and capture the beauty of the ever-changing California landscapes.



About the Exhibition

Gems of California Impressionism celebrates some of the most recognizable pieces of that historic era. Master artists such as Anna Hills, Edgar Payne, and William Wendt were integral in creating the renowned artist colonies in Los Angeles and Orange County at the turn of the twentieth-century. At a time when there was little development in California, their pieces are more than art, they are historic archives of our landscapes, ecosystems, and our way of life so long ago. Their legacies carry on today in many institutions and associations that continue to celebrate a time that captured California so perfectly.

The masterworks featured in this exhibition were carefully selected by James Irvine Swinden, who regards them as the “gems” of his collection. Visitors can look forward to a range of landscapes, including mountain vistas, ocean scenes, and historical sites, all illustrating California’s natural beauty and the activities of its people. Casa Romantica invites guests to step back in time and experience the world as seen through the eyes of California’s pioneering plein air artists.

Pictured: Paul DeLongpre, 'Wild Roses', 15 x 24 inches, Watercolor



Exhibition Catalog

(in alphabetical order)

Maurice Braun

Joseph Kleitsch

Benjamin Brown

Edgar Payne

Colin Campbell Cooper

Granville Redmond

Frank Cuprien

Arthur G. Rider

Paul De Longpre

William Ritschel

Albert Thomas DeRome

Guy Rose

John Frost

Elmer Wachtel

Paul Grimm

Marion Wachtel

Sam Hyde Harris

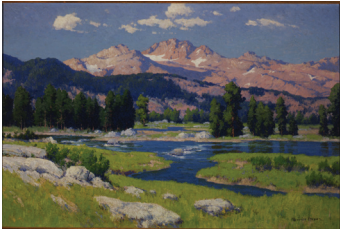
William Wendt

Anna Hills

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens
would like to especially thank James Irvine Swinden for
making this exhibition possible.

Maurice Braun, *Along the Merced River*

Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches



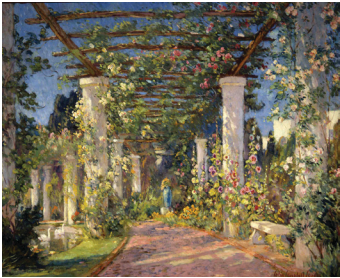
Benjamin Brown, *A Quiet Reach, Matillija Creek*

Oil on canvas, 28 x 36 inches



Colin Campbell Cooper, *Pergola at Samarkand*

Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 inches, c. 1921



Colin Campbell Cooper, *Capistrano Train Station*

Watercolor, 11 x 14 1/2 inches



Frank Cuprien, *An Evening Symphony*

Oil on canvas, 18 x 26 inches



Paul De Longpre, *Wild Roses*

Watercolor, 15 x 24 inches, c. 1898



Albert Thomas DeRome, *Cypress Point, Monterrey Bay*

Oil on canvas, 6 x 8 inches



Albert Thomas DeRome, *Cypress Point, Monterrey*

Oil on canvas, 6 x 8 inches



Albert Thomas DeRome, *Evening Glow, Point Pinos Light*

Oil on canvas, 6 x 8 inches



Albert Thomas DeRome, *Evening, El Sombroso Los Gatos*

Oil on canvas, 6 x 8 inches



John Frost, *Near Lone Pine, California*

Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches, c. 1924



Paul Grimm, *Approaching Storm*

Oil on canvas, 36 x 46 inches



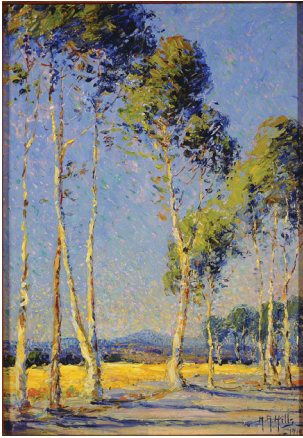
Sam Hyde Harris, *California Mist*

Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches



Anna Hills, *By the Roadside Near El Toro*

Oil on canvas, 14 x 10 inches, c. 1914



Joseph Kleitsch, *San Juan Capistrano*

Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, c. 1924



Edgar Payne, *Sycamore in Autumn, Orange County Park*

Oil on board, 32 x 42 inches, c. 1916



Edgar Payne, *Wine Boats*

Oil on canvas, 20 x 16 inches



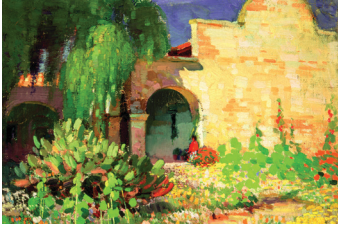
Granville Redmond, *Nocturne*

Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Arthur G. Rider, *Mission Garden, San Juan Capistrano*

Oil on canvas, 22 x 20 inches, c. 1929



Arthur G. Rider, *The Spanish Boat*

Oil on canvas, 35 x 41 inches, c. 1921



William Ritschel, *Boats Returning Home*

Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches



Guy Rose, *Incoming Tide*

Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 inches, c. 1917



Elmer Wachtel, *Golden Autumn, Cajon Pass*

Oil on canvas, 22 x 30 inches



Marion Wachtel, *Summer Afternoon, Santa Monica*

Watercolor, 16 x 20 inches



William Wendt, *Crystal Cove*

Oil on board, 28 x 36 inches, c. 1912



Artist Biographies

Maurice Braun (1877-1941) was born in Hungary and came to the United States at the age of four. He studied painting at the National Academy in New York and with William Merritt Chase. He established himself as a portrait painter. In 1909, he moved to San Diego, established an art school, and became a landscape painter. Although he lived in San Diego, Braun continued to exhibit in the East. Between 1911 and 1915, he exhibited annually at the National Academy in New York as well as in annual exhibitions of contemporary American painting at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, and the Detroit Museum of Art. He is regarded as one of the most important early artists that resided in San Diego at the turn of the century.

Benjamin C. Brown (1865-1942) came to Pasadena from Marion, Arkansas, in 1896. He was the first professional Impressionist painter to live in California and was always held in high regard by his friends and peers. An avid Impressionist, Brown was outspoken in his criticism of other styles of art. He had patrons both in California and in the East. Hoping to encourage more sales, one New York dealer suggested that Brown open a studio there and conceal the fact that he was from California. Brown flatly refused and defiantly began painting the word "California" beneath his signature, affirming his pride in being a Californian.

Colin Campbell Cooper (1856 – 1937) was born into a family of artists. He began his career with Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and later painted throughout Europe. Afterwards, he accepted a teaching post at the Drexel Institute and served as Dean of the Santa Barbara School for the Arts. Cooper's works are associated with various artistic movements and styles. He was heralded as both a New York Impressionist and a California Impressionist, and had ties to the American Orientalist movement. An adept draftsman, he is predominantly associated with his renditions of American skyscrapers, but all of his subject matter captures masterfully the appearance of light moving across planes. He was awarded myriad prizes for his paintings during his career, including gold medals at both the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition.

Frank W. Cuprien (1871-1948) was born in Brooklyn, New York. He studied both art and music at the Cooper Union Art School and the Art Students League of New York. After returning from eleven years of study in Europe, Cuprien devoted his career to painting the ocean in all its moods and colors. Sometime about 1912, he moved to California, living first in Santa Monica and then for a while in Avalon, on Santa Catalina Island, before settling in Laguna Beach. There, he built a studio-home that he called "The Viking." He became one of the leading artists of the community and helped to found the Laguna Beach Art Association in 1918. He served as president of the group from 1921 to 1922.

A master of seascapes, Cuprien was often voted the "People's Choice" in various Laguna Beach Art Association exhibitions during the 1920s and 1930s. He was celebrated for his seascapes with superb visual effects, often showing the coastal light on the ocean in glorious opalescent effects.

Artist Biographies

Paul De Longpre (1855-1911) was born in Villerbanne, near Lyon, France, into a family of noted artist. At the age of twelve, Paul joined the family pursuit of painting flowers as patterns for the textile mills that proliferated in Lyon, at the time a center for the European silk industry. He gained wide popularity in France as a painter of flowers before coming to the United States and settling in New York in 1890. The lure of California's year-round sunshine and blossoms brought de Longpre to Los Angeles in 1898.

In 1900, de Longpre acquired a three- acre parcel of land in the center of Hollywood, which at the time was a quite community of farms and orchards. He built a large Moorish Style mansion and opened the De Longpre Garden, which boasted more than 4,000 rose bushes representing 800 varieties of roses. His garden became the first tourist attraction in Hollywood, years before the advent of the movie studios. He died in his home in 1911.

Albert Thomas DeRome (1885-1959) studied at the California School of Design in San Francisco in 1904. From 1908 to 1914, he worked as a commercial artist, and in 1915, he became a sales manager for a candy manufacturer. During his travels in the West, he painted watercolors and became friends with artists Gunnar Widforss and Percy Gray, often painting with them. After a severe car accident in 1931 left him partially paralyzed and with a speech impediment, he was no longer able to drive and relied on others to take him to painting locations.

DeRome later moved to the Monterey Peninsula, where he befriended local artists like Charles Hittell and Will Sparks. He joined the Carmel Art Association and exhibited his work locally, receiving several awards at the State-Wide Exhibitions in Santa Cruz from 1942 to 1958. Known for his small, luminous coastal scenes and landscapes, DeRome often created oil and watercolor sketches, which he preferred to give to friends and family rather than sell.

John Frost (1890 – 1937) was the son of prominent illustrator, Arthur B. Frost. The Pennsylvanian artist studied painting in Paris and Giverny, returning to America in 1916. He spent the early part of his adult life battling tuberculosis, which affected his health throughout his life. After establishing himself as a successful illustrator in New York, he put forth his classical art training to replicate California and Arizona desert vistas hoping the weather would improve his health. Later on in his career, he took on sporting subjects such as hunting and fishing scenes and eventually gained a reputation as a fine sporting artist.

Artist Biographies

Paul Grimm (1891-1974) was born in King William's Town, South Africa, and came to the United States in 1896, settling in Rochester, New York. At the age of eighteen, he won a scholarship for art study at the Düsseldorf Royal Academy. He came to California in 1919 and resided in Hollywood. There he supported himself by doing design and advertising work as well as by painting backdrops for early Hollywood studios. In 1932, he moved to Palm Springs and remained there the rest of his life. He maintained a small studio-gallery in downtown Palm springs where such notables as President Dwight D. Eisenhower often visited and shared confidences. Eisenhower, who was an amateur painter, once wrote, "I profited from the experience of seeing how a real artist creates the effects he wants." Although Grimm painted scenes of the High Sierra, missions, and Indian Portraits, he is famous as the premier painter of the southern California desert and its many moods. Grimm died in Palm Springs on December 30, 1974.

Sam Hyde Harris (1889-1977) Sam Hyde Harris was born in Brentford, Middlesex, England. He began working as an artist at a very young age. His family emigrated to the United States in November 1903, where they settled in Los Angeles. He continued working as an artist and sign painter in the Los Angeles area. Harris is particularly remembered for his posters produced for various rail lines and travel destinations. He worked for the Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and Southern Pacific Railroads. Harris painted non-commercial works throughout his life. His favorite subjects were scenes from Southern California, including a series of paintings of Chavez Ravine before it was developed, and paintings of the early Los Angeles industrial landscape. Harris won awards from the California Art Club, Laguna Beach Art Association, Los Angeles Art League, Painters and Sculptors Club, Artists of the Southwest, Valley Art Association, and the San Gabriel Festival of Arts. He was a member of the California Art Club.

Anna Hills (1882 – 1930) was born and raised in Ohio. After taking art classes at a small Michigan college, she enrolled at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and then at the Cooper Union Art School in New York City. In 1908, she went abroad for classes at the Académie Julian in Paris. In 1913, she relocated to Laguna Beach where she lived for the rest of her life. Hills co-founded the Laguna Beach Art Association in 1918. Under her leadership, the association raised the funds necessary to purchase the land and build a permanent art gallery, which later became the Laguna Art Museum. Originally a figure and genre painter, Hills turned to landscape painting after her move to California. She actively promoted the visual arts through lectures and by organizing exhibitions that circulated among Orange County public schools.

Joseph Kleitsch (1882 – 1931) was born in the old Hungarian province of Banat, now in Romania. He studied in Budapest, Munich and Paris. By the early 1900s he immigrated to the United States, and in 1920, he moved to Southern California and became a significant member of the Laguna Beach Artist Colony. He was a member of the Chicago Society of Artists, the Palette and Chisel Club of Chicago, and the Painters and Sculptors' club, which he cofounded with Grayson Sayre.

Artist Biographies

Edgar Payne (1883 – 1947) Edgar Payne was born in Washburn, Missouri. He was a self-taught landscape painter and muralist who traveled the American West. Like fellow painter Carl Oscar Borg, he was commissioned to paint posters for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railways. Payne was a member of the California Art Club and the first president of the Laguna Beach Art Association. He produced a documentary film, "Sierra Journey," and wrote the book *Composition of Outdoor Painting*.

Granville Redmond (1871 – 1935) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was educated at the California School of Design in San Francisco and the Académie Julian in Paris. In 1898, he returned to California and settled in Los Angeles. He befriended Charles Chaplin, who gave him an art studio on a silent movie lot, and sponsored him in acting roles as a sculptor in the film *City Lights*. He was a member of the Bohemian Club, the San Francisco Art Association, the California Art Club and the Laguna Beach Art Association.

Arthur G. Rider (1886 – 1975) was born in Chicago, Illinois. He trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago, the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and Colarossi in Paris, and the Werntz Academy of Fine Arts in Valencia, Spain. In 1924, he moved to Los Angeles and maintained a studio-home in Laguna Beach. For over thirty years he was one of the leading scenic artists with MGM and Fox Studios. He was a member of the Palette and Chisel Club, the Chicago Galleries Association, the California Art Club, the Painters and Sculptors Club, and the Laguna Beach Art Association.

William Ritschel (1864-1949) was one of the most influential painters in Northern California. Born in Germany, he spent several years as a sailor before enrolling in art school in Munich. He came to the United States in 1894 and lived in Suffolk, New York, prior to coming to San Francisco in 1909, settling in Carmel in 1911. He is regarded as one of the most important painters of Monterey, with a decided penchant for nautical subjects.

Guy Rose (1867-1925) was born in San Gabriel, California, and grew up on the Rose family ranch, Sunny Slope. In 1876, he was accidentally shot in the chin during a hunting trip, and while he recovered, he retained lead pellets in his chin, leading to chronic lead poisoning throughout his life. Rose studied at the California School of Design in San Francisco, where he took classes with Emil Carlsen and Virgil Williams. He then went to Paris in 1888, enrolling at the Académie Julian. Due to a serious bout of lead poisoning in 1894, he took a break from oil painting but resumed his work around 1897.

In 1904, Rose and his wife, Ethel, moved to Giverny, France, where they joined a small American art colony. Though he did not paint alongside Monet, they were close friends. Rose returned to the U.S. in 1912 and settled in Pasadena in 1914. He painted primarily in Southern California but also spent summers in Carmel and Monterey after 1917. A stroke in 1921 left him partially paralyzed and unable to paint, and he died in 1925.

Artist Biographies

Elmer Wachtel (1864-1929) was born in Baltimore. In 1882, he came to Southern California to live with his older brother John, who had married Nina Rose, the sister of Guy Rose, in 1879. John was manager of the Rose family ranch, Sunny Slope, in the San Gabriel Valley, just north of Los Angeles. A proficient violinist, Elmer Wachtel became first violin of the Philharmonic Orchestra in Los Angeles in 1888. He became active in local art circles, which included John Gutzon Borglum and J. Bond Francisco. With several other artists, they founded the Los Angeles Art Association in the late 1880s. Around 1900, Wachtel went to Europe, studying at the Lambeth School of Art in London, and visiting and painting with his friend Gutzon Borglum. Wachtel returned to Los Angeles and, within a few years, had established a reputation as an accomplished landscape artist. Wachtel and his wife, Marion Kavanagh Wachtel (1870-1954), spent the next twenty-five years as inseparable painting companions, he working in oils and she in watercolor. They traveled throughout California, in the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico, and in Mexico. Wachtel died on August 31, 1929, while on a painting trip in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Marion Kavanagh Wachtel (1870-1954) was born in Milwaukee. She first came to California in 1903, where she won a commission from the Santa Fe Railroad to paint murals in their San Francisco ticket office. She took lessons with William Keith who introduced her to Elmer Wachtel. The two artists fell in love and were married in Chicago in 1904.

Generally regarded as the most important watercolor painter in Southern California, she is often favorably compared to Northern California's Percy Gray (1869-1952). Perhaps so as not to compete with her husband who favored oil painting, Marion worked primarily in watercolor throughout their marriage. Her paintings display remarkable dexterity in the handling of the medium, which could be quite unforgiving even to the most skilled. She received high praise for her delicate, lyrical interpretations of the landscape in a manner that showed her masterful control of tone and color.

William Wendt (1865-1946) was born in Germany, came to Chicago in 1880, and worked in a commercial art firm producing stock paintings under various names other than his own. In Chicago, he met George Gardner Symons (1862-1930) and the two became close painting companions. In 1906, he married sculptor Julia Bracken (1869-1942) and came to live in Los Angeles. He quickly became a leading figure in the Los Angeles art community and was a founding member of the California Art Club in 1909, serving as president from 1911 to 1914, and again from 1917 to 1918. In 1918, he moved to the seaside village of Laguna Beach and was a founding member of the Laguna Beach Art Association. Although somewhat shy and reclusive, he was the town's most important resident artist. To Wendt, nature was a divine manifestation and he viewed himself as nature's faithful interpreter. Only rarely did he include people or animals in his landscapes.





CASA ROMANTICA

CULTURAL CENTER AND GARDENS

The Mission of Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens is to provide cultural programs for all ages, backgrounds, and ethnicities with a special emphasis in celebrating and inspiring the artistic, musical, historical, literary, and horticultural aspects of California. We strive to serve our greater community and beyond.

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