

CRISTIN TIERNEY

H O M E T O W N
PASADENA

Emerging From the Shadows

By Kat Ward
Mar 13, 2017

Women artists. From 1860 to 1960. From realism of the 19th century to the modernism of the 20th century. Painters, sculptors, illustrators, printmakers, and ceramicists. Over 2,000 images. And covering 320 female artists.

This is *Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists in California, 1860-1960* by Maurine St. Gaudens.

The Creative Arts Group in Sierra Madre is hosting an exhibit of 80+ works from artists *Emerging from the Shadows*, most of which have been in private collections and never available to the public.

Opening night is March 18 and a Q&A with Maurine St. Gaudens, Joseph Morsman, and Maureen Seigel Sprawls is open to the public on Friday, April 7.

Maurine St. Gaudens is the granddaughter of San Francisco jeweler Maurice Saint-Gaudens and 3rd cousin of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Maurine is a historian and scholar and a Fine Arts conservator. She established Maurine St. Gaudens Studio in Pasadena.

Emerging from the Shadows is a 4-volume collection, organized alphabetically so “the lesser-known artists are presented in the book alongside their more acknowledged peers; it is time for their personal shadows to fade and for them to emerge—and *Emerging from the Shadows* is a first step.”

Well known artists include Mabel Alvarez who’s style many consider “a contributing factor to the Southern California Modernism California Impressionism movement.” In 1917, at the young age of 26, she had her first portrait painting hung in the now LA County Museum of Art.

Charles Epting in *The New Deal in Orange County, California* credits Helen Lundeberg (along with her husband) with establishing the Post-Surrealist movement, though her style does seem to have changed over the course of her career to include, also, Hard-edge Painting and Subjective Classicism. For six years, 1936-1942, Lundeberg worked for the Works Progress Administration and her Preamble to the Constitution, Free Assembly, and Free Ballot were a series painted for the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, in the 1970s they were removed, and are now considered lost. (In 2013, Kent Twitchell was chosen to “reimagine” Lundeberg’s original artworks.)

CRISTIN TIERNEY



Helen Lundeberg, *Self-Portrait*, 1944, Collection Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, Gift of The Lorusser Feitelson and Helen Lundeberg Feitelson Arts Foundation. Image from exhibit at Laguna Art Museum.

Other artists include plein air painter Anna Hills (who helped raise funds for the Laguna Art Museum), Julia Bracken Wendt who pursued her career while teaching at Otis Art Institute, and Elsie Palmer Payne.

Women Out West wrote in 2013:

California artists Elsie Palmer Payne and her husband Edgar Alwin Payne have each created a body of work that is distinct and original, yet while Edgar earned a reputation as a leader of the California landscape painters, Elsie's work has been unfortunately overlooked. When she discussed her career in relation to her husband's, she remarked with a note of bitterness, (Edgar) "never gave me time to paint! I was always busy waiting on him, packing and unpacking." [1] Edgar, a man firmly entrenched in Victorian values, held the position that "no matter how talented or able, a woman's place was to be at her husband's beck and call." [2]

June Wayne (1918-2011) dropped out of high school to pursue her aspiration to be an artist and though self-taught, she had her first watercolor exhibit at the age of seventeen in the Boulevard Gallery in Chicago in 1935. During WWII, she moved to Los Angeles (her husband was deployed to Europe) and learned Production Illustration at Caltech, which led to more training that got her a job converting blueprints into drawings for the aircraft industry. She took up lithography too, traveling to Europe to learn from master printer Marcel Durassier and, ultimately, she opened the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, revitalizing lithography in the West.

The women profiled were trailblazers, each one essential to the momentum and growth of the arts in California and the Nation; many lived, worked and created art in a time when women still were denied the right to vote, and their contributions ultimately opened the door for heartfelt expression and equality for future generations of artists.

—EmergingFromTheShadows.com

Of *Emerging from the Shadows*, Liz Goldner at *LA Review of Books* writes:

CRISTIN TIERNEY

These figures—who went far beyond the Sunday-painter model that many women followed—were dedicated professionals who studied art, exhibited their work widely (often in illustrious institutions), and won many awards. Their work was technically proficient and often included socially relevant themes. Yet many of them felt compelled to disguise their gender, signing their work merely with initials or with masculine-sounding names, in deference to the norms and expectations of a patriarchal art establishment. Sometimes, when they arrived to collect awards bestowed on them, audiences were surprised to discover that they were not men.

St. Gaudens is a fine-art conservator, consultant, historian, and curator. Over many decades of work, she discovered numerous finely crafted paintings and sculptural pieces created by female artists, most of whom were unknown except by relatives and admirers. St. Gaudens began seriously writing this monumental study in 2010, gleaning material from old newspaper clippings, academic brochures, and ancestry records, and working with a photographer to capture the 2,000 color images. The result is an inspiring series of profiles of dedicated and disciplined creative talents, struggling to excel in what St. Gaudens calls “the fiercely male art establishment.”

—“Recasting California Art History” by Liz Goldner, *LA Review of Books*, November 23, 2016