



*Sculpture by Douglas Tharlson, dramatizing an ongoing argument between Zorthian and Richard Feynman: "who appreciates beauty more, the scientist or the artist?" See article page 8*

## A Few Altadena Artists

by Mark Goldschmidt

Not so long ago Altadena, a leafy backwater up against the mountains with cheap and charming housing, attracted quite a number of artists. A life in art is not easy, it requires fierce inner drive and discipline and a passion to create. It's hard work, and it doesn't generally pay well, especially during the first two or three decades.

Following is a brief introduction to just a few of the working artists in our community. Apologies to the many who have been omitted, some with international reputations, this is merely a representative sample. There is little room to reproduce the art in this publication, so readers are urged to visit the artists' websites and take a good long look. You will be surprised and rewarded, not just by the art, but also by what they have to say,

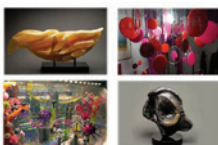
**Gary Brewer** paints luminous canvases, biologically inspired. Some are figurative, like his large erotic closeups of orchids, others more abstract, but all are finely modeled in three dimensions and inspired by life forms. He has recently begun working in clay to create forms that recall sea creatures.



Gary Brewer

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## Upcoming Events



Art-Full Homes Tour  
September 14, 4- 7 PM



5th Annual Tree Giveaway  
November 16th

# Letter from the Chair

Val Zavala

First and foremost, I want to put the spotlight on Altadena Heritage's long-time newsletter editor, Mark Goldschmidt. This will be his last issue. Mark — along with essential help from his wife, Michele — has brought these newsletters to print almost 20 years, delivering interesting, solid and informative journalism to our community. The hours he has devoted are truly countless. We plan to continue these newsletters and will strive to replicate the smart, succinct writing and the attractive layouts that Mark's talents have consistently produced. Thank you, Mark, for your years of dedication to local journalism that has enhanced the Altadena Heritage membership experience.

I'm also happy to report that our membership now includes Patrons, Angels and Heroes. Many of you stepped-up to those higher levels. Out of about 300 members, we have 66 Patrons, 11 Heroes and 3 Angels. Thank you for your generosity. It's only appropriate that the focus of this Newsletter is on Altadena artists. This edition profiles just a few of the many artists that help make Altadena a creative and beautiful place. Also this year, through the energy and



initiative of board member, Gary Mendes, we have added art and photography contests to the many events we organize. We reached out to young people especially who were awarded cash prizes for their work. We plan to continue these competitions over the years to tap the art and photographic talents of Altadenans. This year we also added an "Art-Full House Tour" to our calendar. We look forward to seeing you on September 14th to visit three homes in Central Altadena where art — both inside and outside — is a unique and prominent feature. Special thanks to Brian and Andrea Mark, Mark Goldschmidt and Michele Zack, Sabine Meyer zu Reckendorf and Kent Johnson for opening their homes to Altadena Heritage. This December we will hold our annual member holiday gathering. (Free to all members.) Once again, it will be at an historic home that exemplifies the beauty and elegance of Altadena's architectural legacy. We look forward to seeing you there.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Val Zavala", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

## Kay Nielsen

In 1936, Danish illustrator and theatrical designer Kay Nielsen moved to a home on Marigold Street in Altadena with his wife, Ulla. He found work at the Disney Studio where he designed art for the Night on Bald Mountain sequence in *Fantasia*, and subsequently for *Snow White and The Little Mermaid* (for which he was credited 50 years later when that film was finally made).

Nielsen drew exquisite lines, and his images often included generous empty spaces that contrasted with fields of intricate pattern. The heroes and princesses he depicted are clearly beings from a magical age, and picture elements are arranged on the page to create extreme dramatic effect, something he probably derived from his experience creating theatrical sets and costumes. In fact, his theatrical and illustration work continued in tandem through the 1920s.

Nielsen was Born in Copenhagen in 1886 to a prominent artistic family - his parents were actors and directors at Copenhagen's Royal Danish Theater. Nielsen studied in Paris from 1904 to 1911, followed by several years in England. There he gained commissions to illustrate high-quality "gift books" of fairy tales using a recently developed four-color printing process. Nielsen's illustrations for *Sleeping Beauty*, *Puss in Boots*, *Cinderella* and *Bluebeard* were published in 1913 Christmas Edition to great success. His most famous work is *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, *Tales from the Far North*. His career flourished internationally with commissions for illustration, theatrical set and costume design, and a one



man show in New York in 1917. He married Ulla (18 years his junior) and they were part of a lively international artistic scene. However, around 1930 work began to dry up. It was the Great Depression and Art Nouveau had become passé. In 1936 he and his wife decamped to Hollywood for work and to a home on Marigold Street in Altadena, where they were befriended by neighbors Hildegard Flanner, a poet, and her architect husband Frederic Monhoff.

Disney let him go in 1942. It is easy to see why. *Fantasia* was a financial failure, and Walt turned to producing lighter fare for the modern American family. Nielsen had gained fame depicting the magical and sinister world of fairy tales; the heavy emotions his images conjure were way too dark for Disney. Nielsen just couldn't do cornball.

Flanner recounted the last years of the Niensens' lives in her book *Different Images, Portraits of Remembered People*. During the last 15 years of Kay's life work was sparse; there were at least three mural commissions, and some greeting cards, but he and Ulla experienced a steady decline into poverty. They were worldly, genteel, courteous and proud, and their home was nicely furnished with things they had brought from Denmark. Kay was known as a natty dresser. A heavy smoker all his life, his lungs gave out in 1957. He was 71.

After his death, Ulla tried to place his works with museums and private collections, but found no takers for any of it. Flanner describes her unsealing a wooden box, from which she withdrew plate after gorgeous plate of original art for an edition of *The Arabian Nights* that was never printed. Kay's funeral took place before a mural he had painted of the 23rd Psalm at the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles on Commonwealth Avenue. Ulla died a year later.

# Charles White: An Illustrious Legacy

By Val Zavala

Charles White, one of America's most important artists, first lived Altadena in 1959 on Kent Street and later moved to the Meadows neighborhood. White (1918 – 1979) “dedicated his life and work to conveying the concerns, sentiments and beauty of African Americans ... always with the dignity they so rightly deserved but were so often denied.” His work includes images of famous African American leaders as well as everyday people like preachers, mothers, musicians and sharecroppers.

His talent developed during his childhood in Chicago. His mother, a domestic worker dropped him at a library or art gallery while she worked. In seventh grade he received a scholarship to attend the Art Institute of Chicago on Saturdays where he developed his natural talents. Later he won several art scholarships, but they were rescinded when the donors realized he was Black. Finally in 1937 he enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago on a scholarship. His career began with the Works Progress Administration, which hired artists during the depression to chronicle the American people in various media. For his first public piece he created a large canvas called “Five Great American Negroes.” In vibrant colors it depicts Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Marian Anderson, and George Washington Carver. Among the very few white people he depicted in his entire oeuvre were Abraham Lincoln and John Brown.

During WWII he served in the army in a segregated



division but was discharged because of pre-existing health problems. Teaching positions took him to New Orleans and New York. It was, however, tuberculosis that brought him to Los Angeles, where he settled down with his second wife and two children.

The Norman Rockwell Museum writes: “Although Los Angeles was not located near the hub of the Civil Rights movement, through his work he continued to comment on the violence and heroism of those who stood up against racism and discrimination. His



work magnified the power of black figures through both scale and form, and his career flourished as he pushed at his own boundaries of which medium to use while also continuing to engage with the Civil Rights movement and the fight for equality.”

In the 60's he was represented by the Heritage Gallery and his work was exhibited more frequently abroad and across the United States. In 1965 he accepted a job teaching at Otis Art Institute, eventually becoming chair of the Drawing Department. In his 14 years at Otis he influenced a younger generation of artists. To this day White is revered by LA area artists including Richard Wyatt, Kerry James Marshall, Kent Twitchell, Timothy Washington, David Hammons and Judith Hernandez.

White's final major artwork was completed in 1978, a mural called Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune—Last Will and Testament at the Mary McLeod Bethune Public Library in Exposition Park in Los Angeles. White's art can also be seen at the National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art among others.

Charles White died of congestive heart failure in 1979 at 61. On October 25, 1980 the park near Fair Oaks Avenue and Mountain View Street was named after him. His son, Ian White, lives in Altadena in the Meadows.

# Altadena's Gallerist

By Mark Goldschmidt

When we returned to Altadena in 1998, my 9-year old daughter and I walked up to McGinty's vintage clothing shop just up Lake from the hardware store on Mariposa. My daughter had grown up in Bangkok, and to her Altadena was deadsville. Her face just lit up when we walked in his Vintage Underground shop filled with interesting clothing, great colors, a cafe, and a big guy with tattooed arms and torso who radiated energy and bonhomie. That was when I first met Ben McGinty.

Ben closed the Vintage shop not long after, but kept the place, where a year or two later opened the Underground Art Society, a co-op gallery for local artists. Every month a new artist would be featured at a gala opening party, and every month Ben would have rearranged the place, a whole new floor plan, a maze of cabinets, screens, and sculpture, the walls completely covered with paintings. He had phenomenal energy and enthusiasm.

The Underground Art Society became a nexus for an Altadena art scene. Art appreciators, artists and would-be artists, and people of all ages, came and hung out at the gallery. The openings had a pleasant happy vibe, the butt-to-butt crowd trended bohemian/intellectual. It was fun and quite wholesome. Altadena was inexpensive in those days, and home to many artists and musicians. The Underground Art Society became a haven for artsy youth, one place in town they were welcome on a Saturday night, and it became something of an incubator for future artists.

When the building was sold in 2005, Ben moved just up Lake into the old barber shop (now Cafe con Leche) and took over a driveway and little parking area behind, and opened The Gallery at the End of the World. This was the happening place for the next five years, with regular evening openings, a courtyard full of art, a fire pit, musicians and a mammoth trumpet vine that Ben arranged to partially roof the courtyard space.



*Ben, Citizen of the Year, wears a crown made by artist friends.*

That ended in 2010; three years later he reopened on Mariposa where his shop remains today. For a while it hosted gallery openings, but after Covid it has become what it is today, a quality vintage clothing and antique shop with interesting art and the pick of the merchandise Ben acquires in his estate sale business.

In 2017 Altadena Heritage nominated Ben for the Altadena Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year. There was some push-back: he runs a business, he should be Business of the Year. But others of us who had experienced his creativity and hospitality knew Ben as a major force in Altadena's arts scene, and thus a local Citizen Hero.

## A Few Altadena Artists (continued)



*Aline Mare*

**Aline Mare** has her roots in New York where she produced films, multi-media events, and performances, and where she received numerous grants and residencies. Her recent paintings are idea-driven. "Dam dams" is a series that focuses on dismantling of obsolete dams, while another, "He, She, They" examines "paradoxes in the heart of notions of masculinity." And yet the paintings in soft layered color generate an emotional rather than an intellectual response. • [aline.mare.com](http://aline.mare.com), [garybrewerart.com](http://garybrewerart.com)

"I interpret our world through the lens of science and art to shed light on the relationship between the environment and human nature. I work with a hybrid form of painting, photography, and installation, synthesizing my aesthetic sensibilities with a deep interest in the natural cycles of the earth."

# Mabel Duncan — an Appreciation

By Michele Zack

Mabel Duncan, AH Board Member from 2009-14, died last month at her home on Los Flores Drive. She will be missed as a beloved member of a noted local family, dear friend, and long-time professor of US Government and Economics at PCC.

We met as Altadena Town Council members; after five or six years of service, we migrated over to Altadena Heritage's board—which we agreed was more fun! Mabel was secretary and volunteered for everything, but I most cherish the memory of her as boon companion on Costco runs. We must have done a dozen of these to “fill out” AH's huge party buffets where homemade fare dominated in those days: Thai and Indian curries, roasted turkeys, hams, salads, and cucumber sandwiches were complemented by a copious array of Costco-sourced cheese, profiteroles (mini cream puffs), and gooey cakes. Gauging how much 100-200 could eat is always tricky, but we never ran out of food.

Inveterately cheerful, Mabel always offered to drive, picking me up in one stylish car or another — usually a new BMW with a huge trunk provided by her grandson Tony. She was an excellent driver through her 80s, but coy about her age. Her mother's words had stuck with her: “a woman who tells you her age will say anything!” We approached the Los Feliz Costco with military precision, arriving at opening bell, and trying to beat our previous time. Conversation on the drives there and back was always the best part, and when I learned of her extraordinary life.

Mabel came from a family of 13 children; her father was an Irishman from the Bahamas, and her mother an African American. Their mixed marriage was unusual at a time when Pasadena was

segregated —she remembers the Brookside plunge was open to her and siblings only one day a week, and they had to sit in the balconies of movie theaters.

In spite of obstacles, most of the Duncan kids made it to college and had notable careers. Arthur became famous — a tap dancer and first African American regular performer on television in 1954 (the Betty White show), followed by 18 years with Lawrence Welk. Mabel earned a BA in speech pathology, then went back in her 40s to earn a masters degree in planning on a Ford Foundation Scholarship at USC when she became a single mother.

She volunteered in many organizations and was particularly proud when a group she was involved with provided Misty Copeland with a scholarship before she joined the American Ballet Theatre in 2000 and made history as Black Female Principal Dancer in 2007.

Her entire family was honored in Pasadena Museum of History's 2009 “Family Stories” program, chosen as one of six minority families to represent the city's racially diverse, ethnic history. Brad Macneil, co-curator, remembers the museum held an open call to find families with “inspiring stories and good stuff” to create the exhibition.

“The Duncans were amazing, there were so many siblings, all with community success stories — businessmen, bankers, military men, educators, a pioneering fire-fighter, and an entertainer. They presented their story with heirlooms and artifacts including remarkable images portraying them with celebrities and politicians. They had style!”

We will all miss Mabel's many talents, good nature, and wise heart — and I never enter Costco without thinking of her.



Miki Yokoyama

Abstract shapes, intricate patterns, animate images of fish, flowers, butterflies, mountains, suns and stars intertwined with sinuous vining lines fill Miki Yokoyama's joyful paintings.

Miki prepares her canvases with dyes to create a mottled background of deep colors that she paints over with lighter oils. Colors are vibrant, her lines are smooth and sensuous, and the overlay on dark backgrounds creates a sense of cosmic depth. You can lose yourself into her large paintings.

• [Mikiyokoyama.com](http://Mikiyokoyama.com)

“I realize I am a tiny thing in the world, only here for just an instant, yet I am a part of all creation, the whole pulsating enormity of life. It will all collapse some day, but in the moment it is exciting and beautiful and terrible, happy and sad. I paint every day to express my amazement at the swirling, ever-morphing fabric of existence. I want people to see what I see.”

Continued on next page

## A Few Altadena Artists (continued)



*James Griffith*

Fifteen years ago, **James Griffith**'s paintings were not attracting buyers, so he decided to explore a new medium (oil paint has gotten so expensive). He drove to the La Brea Tar Pits, asked if he could have a bucket of tar. They laughed "How much you want? We can't get rid of the stuff." That started him on his Tar Paintings. He found inspiration in the crude gritty brown petroleum, the remains of ancient micro-organisms from the Miocene. He feels a connection across the aeons at the dawn of life when he drops some goo on his canvas, swirls it around, and finds shapes that suggest images, mostly of animals. He etches this vision into the drying tar — new life superimposed on the ancient. James and his wife, and artist Sue Dadd, are probably most well known in Altadena for the Folly Bowl, a magical private amphitheater they generously share with the community. It is a work of art, a garden, a music venue, and it shores up the steep slope below their home. [jamesgriffithpainting.com](http://jamesgriffithpainting.com)

"I have abandoned the traditional oils of my earlier paintings and replaced them with tar. Tar is primordial goo made from extinct organisms over geological periods of time. Depicting living animals with tar suggests transformative cycles of evolution and extinction. Tar also reminds us of our own potential extinction caused by our need to burn petrochemicals."

Painter **Patty Wickman** works in a studio adjacent to Tim Hawkinson in their Altadena back yard (they are married). She teaches at UCLA and is a highly respected painter with a long track record. Currently she is painting scenes of events meaningful to her and her family. As with so many artists, her style and subject matter have changed over the years. Very interesting [pattywickman.com/paintings](http://pattywickman.com/paintings)

"My work originates from significant bodily gestures, from a range of situations, sources and experiences encompassing the humble and the exalted, the everyday and the intensely personal, and from found and staged imagery."



*Patty Wickman*



*Lynne McDaniel*

**Lynne McDaniel** focuses on land and what our civilization does to it. Her landscape paintings — hazy shapes in muted sepias and rich grays, often with a small orange accent — are quiet, yet powerful. It is all about the land; people rarely appear in her work. • [lynnemcdaniel.com](http://lynnemcdaniel.com)

“My work is about the gradual metamorphosis of the landscape as well as the more immediate impact of a human presence. I use geography — features of the landscape — as the context to explore these changes. I am seeking to express not merely the reality of the landscape I see, but the emotional connection to the space in my imagination.”

**Donna Barnes Roberts** loves flowers. Her watercolors are exquisite, they show what can be done with watercolor by a true master of the medium. Technically perfect, shading is subtle and nuanced. Somehow, in her portraits of flowers, you can see that she loves each and every one. Donna has taught watercolor for years in Altadena and is known to be quite demanding, but if you want to do it right, she’s the teacher for you. • [barnesroberts.com](http://barnesroberts.com)



*Donna Barnes Roberts*

“I was laid off, and it was okay because painting was what I really wanted to do. I realized this is what I could contribute to my fellow human — a way of looking at the world in detail.”

British expat **Sylvana Lankshear** came to Los Angeles in her twenties for a successful career in the fashion industry. She quit that, and now she paints in her beautiful studio up the hill. Her impressionistic lands-and-cityscapes are outstanding. She still does those, but now she is concentrating on portraiture. Her likenesses are keen, they capture character and are remarkably alive. • [sylvanalankshear.com](http://sylvanalankshear.com)



*Sylvana Lankshear*

“My life long journey as an artist continues with endless fascination and inspiration in representational oil painting and charcoal drawings, capturing ‘Nature and Humanity’. I work professionally on portrait commissions, as well as enjoying each day here in my home studio in Altadena, working on a myriad of painting projects.”

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# The Legend of Jirayr Zorthian

By Hans Allhoff

We could all travel less and burrow into our own backyards more. Stay home, go deep, practice monogamy of place. Don't be that person who's just heard of the Zorthian Ranch. Be someone who's been.

You can look down on the Ranch from high on Chaney Trail or Mount Lowe Road, and glimpse why a Star News writer called it a "trash-strewn hilltop." Not entirely unfair: Jirayr Zorthian could be accused of razing healthy orchards and amassing non-op cars, industrial waste, and construction debris—in service to his art, of course.

the Pentagon isn't out of the question. A digitized version spans the wall of an AirBnB on the Ranch.

Today, the Ranch comprises 40 acres that's home to Jirayr's son Alan (a long-time AH board member), a number of docents, and experiments in the following: permaculture and agriculture, all kinds of art, animal husbandry, assemblage architecture, and living resourcefully. A modern economy and permit-policing state aren't kind to places like the Ranch. But admirably, if imperfectly, it endures — and the next generation, including Alan's daughters Caroline and Julia, are making their own wonderful imprints.



*Jirayr and wife Dabney displayed on the mantle in the Zor-house.*

But should that matter, if it didn't matter to the marvelous cast of characters the Ranch drew? L.A. bohemians, Andy Warhol, JPL intellectuals, art luminaries, Bob Dylan, John Lautner, the jazzman Charlie Parker, and most legendary, the Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman.

Zorthian was an Armenian who fled the genocide as a boy, and landed on some Altadena acreage in 1946 by way of Yale School of Art, Europe, FDR's WPA, and the United States Army. As a GI he worked in intelligence and painted his mural masterpiece *The Phantasmagoria of Military Intelligence Training*. The whereabouts of the 4 x 157 foot mural are unknown, but a since-covered wall at

Alan worked for years after his father's death in 2004, and still works, to clear away the accumulated detritus that has irked County health and other officials. That is its own artistic practice and challenge. Why scrap the old handpainted Zor Bus, or a classic car, if there's a chance it can be made to run?

Visually, the Ranch remains funky — more reclusive Topanga, you might think, than beautiful Altadena. There is a pool with a view, but it won't make your vision board if you typically source from Dwell and Architecture Digest. The ascent is precarious, if you prefer your roads graded and your bridges sturdy, but you forget all that at the top. Welcome to what Zorthian himself called

*Continued on next page.*

“The Center for Research and Development of Industrial Discards with Emphasis on Aesthetics.” Alan jokes his dad always said he needed 40 more years to get the Ranch right. La Sagrada Familia de Altadena.

The Ranch belongs here all the same, though, because it stands for the same thing Altadena stands for, namely, the primacy of place in our happiness and freedom. Counter-cultural, sure, but not antagonistically so. You can’t just show up at the Ranch, but if something is happening—and something usually is happening—everyone is welcome.

But back to the man. The wild man.

“Jerry” was Dionysian and unpretentious in his worldview, but a Yale man, millimeters removed from Skull and Bones. Knowing that Jerry and Richard Feynman were dear friends, trading lessons in physics and art for years, I like to imagine how a meeting between the artist and William F. Buckley, his fellow alumnus, would have gone. Would WFB have threatened to “sock him in the goddamn face,” as he did Gore Vidal? This would have ended poorly: Jerry was 5’3 but a ferocious and decorated wrestler.

Zorthian was a witness not only to genocide but to the death of his own 18-month old son, whom he accidentally, tragically, backed over in his van. Yet he came out on the other side with a life oriented to experimentation and play. He often painted nudes and in later years famously hosted a birthday party every spring in which he, calling himself Zor-Bacchus, sat on a throne as nude women danced around him.

He was a trained artist, but uninterested in the art world or the art business. He studied Michaelangelo and da Vinci while in Europe, and wanted to be broadly talented like them. It was always the Ranch, not any piece or portfolio of art, that was Jerry’s lifeline and justification.

Zorthian’s art does hang at the Ranch, of course — a portrait of Miss October 1963 Christine Williams is in the Ranch’s version of a gift shop (and photos of Zorthian painting it in Playboy’s

October 1963 issue). Across the room is a massive painting, The Divorcement, depicting the disintegration of his first marriage. That wife, Betty Williams, served him with papers upon his return from Syria attending to the death of his father. As Alan tells it, she’d been in Pasadena, falling in with Jack Parsons, L. Ron Hubbard, and Alistair Crowley. In the divorce, she got the kids and he the land. His second marriage, to his enduring muse Dabney (and Alan’s mother), lasted until his death.

The Feynman friendship left an artistic footprint, too. There is the Feynman Wall of Passion, a stone and brick wall inlaid with found objects that frames a small sanctuary. Across the way, a metal sculpture approximately the size of an RV represents the collision and harmony of their respective fields.

But it feels like the art isn’t the main point of the Ranch. It’s the built environment—almost all of it by the hands of Ranch-dwellers themselves. It is habitable, and that’s just fine: it may even be what the Ranch sees as one of its defining virtues. If you’re trying to serve up an alternative vision of how to live, and what to live for, construction details are decidedly not the point. It is telling that Jerry considered the Boy Scouts of his youth as formative to his design philosophy as Yale.

About the jazzman’s visit: “Charlie Parker at Jirayr Zorthian’s Ranch, July 14, 1952,” is not easy listening. It exists because someone on the property happened to have a reel-to-reel tape recorder: the liner notes say “the sound quality is inevitably bad.” But that is not an apology, because what you’re listening to is less a concert than a night in time. The story of their meeting and the night is told in comic-book form in Chasin’ the Bird: A Charlie Parker Graphic Novel.

The Ranch is pure Jerry. But emerging from it, rolling back down to Loma Alta, the poet Gary Snyder comes to mind: “Find your place on the planet, dig in, and take responsibility from there.” Alan told me that when his dad came to southern California, he first looked at La Jolla. Let’s celebrate that this beautiful person found Altadena and dug in here instead.

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## A Few Altadena Artists (continued)



*Carolie Parker*

**Carolie Parker** is both a poet and visual artist, having earned degrees in comparative literature and studio art. She has exhibited extensively around Southern California, published in a number of poetry periodicals, and curates shows for artist-owned galleries in LA. [carolieparker.com](http://carolieparker.com)

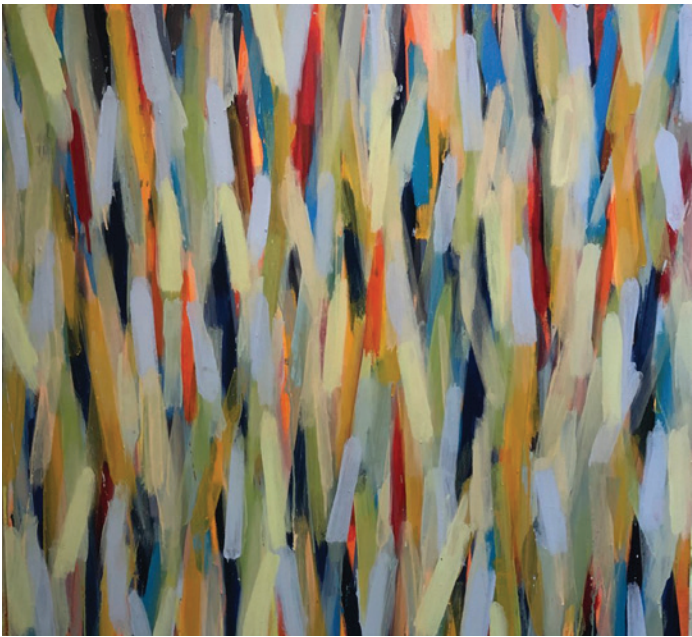
“Protean shape-changing and shifts of medium are an aspect of my practice in both painting and sculpture. In my three-dimensional work, I mold, bend, and twist clay in a process akin to that exerted by the earth’s forces of compression, abrasion, and stretching. My paintings on paper explore color and quality of light in translucent watercolor forms with serigraph overlays.”

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## A Few Altadena Artists (continued)

**Philip Vaughn**, an expat Brit, raised in France, educated in England, gave up Cambridge architecture for art school, became a sculptor and teacher. In 1977 he built a sailboat, and sailed it across the Atlantic, ending up in Florida. There he hired on to Disney Imagineering, a job that eventually brought him to California and Altadena. Fascinated with the way colors interact, he paints and sculpts kinetic neon light sculptures. Watch them morph on video loops at [philipvaughan.net](http://philipvaughan.net)

“I have always been interested in the idea that art is the process of examining and sifting – dimensional space, the environment but also emotions, observations, intuitions, finding their essence and in the process making a record of that investigation. The goal is a search for a buried truth. It’s my interpretation of truth, but the hope is that there will be a commonality about it that will resonate with others.”



*Philip Vaughn*

**Eric Zammitt** paintings are made from tens of thousands of solid bits of colored acrylic plastic, fused together, sanded and polished. He assembles colors in rhythmic patterns that shift and blend, recalling music in the way they conjure emotions — color music. Eric has a great video of his process at [ericzammitt.com](http://ericzammitt.com).

“Color and pattern are primal to our history and survival. They touch parts of us that are archetypal, rooted in nature, and infinitely curious. For me, colored acrylic plastic is simply paint, but in solid form, and my “brushes” are the bandsaw, table saw, and glue.”



*Coleen Sterritt*

**Coleen Sterritt**’s sculptures are assemblages of natural materials and the detritus of our civilization that she puts together in intuitive ways. Her graphic works on paper portray abstract biomorphic forms in color. [coleensterritt.com](http://coleensterritt.com)

“I am interested in the poetics of ordinary objects and materials and what they might reveal about our human experience. My hybrid sculpture evokes the interplay of nature, culture, and lived experience.”



*Eric Zammitt*

It seems like **Tim Hawkinson** can make anything, but his manual skill is nothing compared to his fantastical imagination. He crafts odd and beautiful stringed musical instruments, intricate small sculptures and enormous ones, he is a gifted realist painter, and much more. “Überorgan” consisted of thirteen bus-sized inflated bags made from plastic sheeting: one for each the twelve tones in the musical scale and one udder-shaped bag to feed air to the other twelve through tubular ducts. Operated by an ingenious player-piano-type mechanism it pulsed and swayed and filled the Getty Rotunda with unearthly sounds. Awe inspiring and whimsical, it cannot be adequately described in words; watch the video — google Überorgan at the Getty.

Currently Hawkinson is painting small photorealistic oils from snapshots of him and his family on a cunning easel based on an old wooden ladder. Fully mechanized, a servo motor raises, lowers and tilts his canvas to the perfect angle and height. A 21-foot-tall bear sculpture constructed of boulders is just one more remarkable creation to spring from his brain. The short video is mind-blowing:

• [stuartcollection.ucsd.edu/artist/hawkinson.html](http://stuartcollection.ucsd.edu/artist/hawkinson.html)



*Tim with painting in progress on his motorized easel.*



*Sabine Meyer zu Reckendorf*

Another local artist with outstanding mechanical skills, a fertile imagination, and a vigorous work ethic is **Sabine Meyer zu Reckendorf**. She crafts cunning little sculptures from household and industrial materials, many of them are animated with tiny motors. Her most magnificent artwork is her home and garden, on to which she has lavished her skills, imagination, and untold hours of hard work to transform it into a whimsical wonderland of sculpture, brightly colored tile, and lush plants. Sabine works in many materials, and designs lighting and furniture; her craftsmanship is impeccable, belying her industrial training. Her website features her fantastical sculptures. Her home is featured in the Artful Homes Tour on September 14th. • [sabinemeyezureckendorf.com](http://sabinemeyezureckendorf.com)

“My work is heavily informed by my education as a designer in Muenster, Germany. I brought those design and fabrication skills back home to freedom-loving California and infused German quality engineering with fun and color. I am influenced by Niki de St. Phalle, Jean Tinguely and others in my use of motors, bold lines and bright colors.”

Currently **Mark Steven Greenfield** is painting icons, jewel-like paintings on gilded panels, honoring members of the Black diaspora, the men and women who triumphed in some way over slavery and racism. They tell stories of, in his words, “black saints, folk saints and pseudo-saints, and a few scoundrels.” Few records were kept of Black accomplishments and victories through history. If there are no pictures to go on. Mark channels the characters, then renders them with visual symbols of their lives to memorialize their story.

Earlier work dealt with Jim Crow imagery, cartoons and minstrel shows. Mark says “it came out of “the need to take the power away from images used to promote African American stereotypes. With the icons I’ve come around to looking at the good side, all the accomplishments and the bravery.” • [markstevengreenfield.com](http://markstevengreenfield.com)

“My work concerns itself with the complexities of the African American experience, both historical and contemporary. The work revolves around themes as diverse as African American stereotypes, spiritual practices, social justice, meditative practices and abstraction.”



*Mark Steven Greenfield*



Altadena Heritage  
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*Paul McCarthy with in-progress clay bust of actor Charles Bronson. 2021*  
• Photo: Joyce Kim

## A Few Altadena Artists (continued)

Undoubtedly the most internationally famous artist in Altadena would be **Paul McCarthy**. His multidisciplinary, frequently scatological works often include self-abasement of the most shocking sorts. He can be quite funny, but just what he's trying to say is hard to discern. It seems he holds Western civilization in supreme contempt, there is anger along with the mockery. Hauser Wirth, his gallery, writes "Paul McCarthy is widely considered to be one of the most influential and groundbreaking contemporary American artists... he first established a multi-faceted artistic practice, which sought to break the limitations of painting by using unorthodox materials such as bodily fluid and food." He gained fame when a giant brown inflatable called "Complex Shit" exhibited at the Paul Klee Centre in Berne, was hoisted by a gust of wind, took down some power lines and damaged a nearby children's home. Many regard his art highly, and it does make an impression.

• [thecollector.com/paul-mccarthy-public-sculptures](http://thecollector.com/paul-mccarthy-public-sculptures)



Art-Full Homes Tour  
September 14, 4- 7 PM



5th Annual Tree Giveaway  
November 16th



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