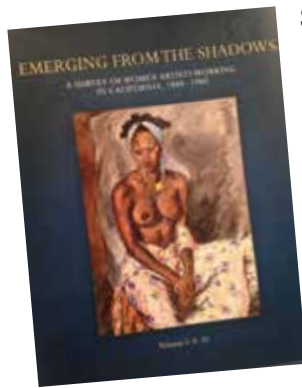


Emerging from the Shadows

By Maureen Siegel Sprowles, La Cañada Flintridge Resident



It is my distinct pleasure to invite you to the Flintridge Bookstore & Coffee House on Thursday, March 31 at 7 PM to celebrate the presentation of a monumental four volume set of books: “Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California 1860-1960.” This formidable work, created by noted fine art conservator and author Maurine



St. Gaudens and her art historian and research assistant, Joseph Morsman, chronicles the lives and artworks of a largely forgotten yet incredibly vibrant community of 320 women artists. It is a stunning collection, both for the detailed biographies and the broad spectrum of art presented.

For many reasons, this project has a special place in my heart. We lost our home and many of our belongings to a fire over five years ago. While it is easy to count all the losses, the blessings were few. Most of my flea market treasures perished in the fire, but I was fortunate to find the incomparable Maurine St. Gaudens to attempt the Herculean task of restoring what little art survived.

While Maurine was working miracles, she noticed that some of my paintings were by California women artists. She spoke with great passion and clarity of her years long effort to bring attention to the little known but incredibly gifted California women artists. I was hooked, and wanted to help in any way possible. Fortunately, Maurine and Joseph made a place for me. I became their proofreader. Long before I saw their paintings, sculptures, prints and ceramic masterpieces, I became immersed in the life stories of these gifted women.

These women led full and fascinating lives. They crossed the country in covered wagons and later traveled by air to Europe to study and paint. They were communists, anarchists, labor activists and matrons of high society. Some never married, while others lived traditional lives as wives and mothers. Many flaunted convention: they took multiple lovers; they were lesbians, and divorcees. Many were progressive thinkers. Some attended the most prestigious universities in the country. Others embraced teaching, opened their own studios and influenced generations of artists to come. Most struggled to make their way in an art world dominated by their male counterparts. They worked and created art at a time when they were still denied the right to vote. Trying to even the playing field, they often hid their identities with genderless signatures. They were all passionately committed to their art. And then, almost inexplicably, many of them simply disappeared.

Maurine and Joseph have worked for years to rediscover these wonderfully talented and unique artists and their art. Their difficult journey through old census records, news clippings, journals, dusty attics, closets and even behind a chair in my house was well worth the effort. Now, presented with over 2000 images, these volumes are a must have for anyone interested in the significant contribution of women to the world of art.

So whether you are a knowledgeable art historian, an avid art collector, a maven of California’s rich history, an avowed feminist, or simply someone who appreciates beauty in all its magnificent manifestations, please join me at the Flintridge Bookstore & Coffee House on March 31 to shine a light on these incredible women artists who, at long last, are emerging from the shadows.