

Gayle Childress

Her career in Art began early winning the 1957 Bullock's Achievement in the Arts award and the Los Angeles Art Center College of Design's Summer Scholarship, both for the outstanding high school student in Art. Her path as an artist unfolded before her.

In 1976 she moved to Ojai, California, with her husband and 3 children. It is there that she became very active in the Ventura County/Ojai Arts community, where she taught art in the Ojai schools and was appointed to the City's Arts Advisory Board. While on this Commission, she co-created a City Art Gallery, and began the acquisition of local art for the City of Ojai's permanent Art Collection as well as its changing exhibits within the City Hall. Gayel also co-initiated an Annual City Granting Arts Program, where a portion of the annual city's budget was allocated for the Arts Program, and in 1985 created the first Arts and Crafts Program for the City of Ojai's Parks and Recreation Department.

She is one of the original founders of the Ojai Studio Artists Tour, an annual event spanning over 30 years; and co-founder of the Gold Coast Watercolor Society, a prestigious arts institution for California artists.

Gayel Childress has actively been creating and showing her work throughout California since the 1980's. She is a beloved icon in the Ojai Arts community, where in 1996 she was nominated as a "Living Treasure" of the Ojai Valley in the field of Art, received a Commendation from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors for "Outstanding Contribution in the Arts in Ventura County" in 1997, and awarded the "Ojai Lifetime Achievement Award" in 1999. By popular vote Gayel was awarded the "Best Artist" of Ojai in 2014.

Gayel's art has received numerous purchase awards from the City of Ventura and Ojai as part of their permanent collections.

Sherry Loehr

Award-winning Ojai artist Sherry Loehr is best known for her still-life compositions inspired by nature done in a unique aesthetic style she calls "Contemporary Realism." The painter unexpectedly combines subjects rendered with colorful Old Masters classic realism, and imaginative backgrounds that display a modern sensibility for abstraction, calligraphy and collage. The abstract elements act as a foil for the perfection of the real world; and the contrast gives the subject emotional energy and thrusts the painting into a balance between reality and imagination. After a BFA in English and Art from University of Colorado and MA in Art Education from Columbia University, Sherry spent 12 years designing and producing a line of whimsical ceramic tableware. She shifted focus in 1990 to watermedia paintings - she underpaints with watercolor and finishes the painting with glazes of transparent acrylic colors - for which she has gained considerable recognition. Loehr has found a new way to make the still-life dramatically engaging and endlessly captivating as she explores its almost limitless range of exciting shapes, colors and patterns. An exhibition of her bird series was displayed at the Live Oak Gallery in Ventura in 2003. The featured birds and plant life found in Downtown Ventura against her characteristically enigmatic and moody backgrounds.

The artist is a signature member of the National Watercolor Society, Studio Artists, Santa Barbara Art Association, and one of the first signature members of the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society. Her prints are distributed through Art in Motion, founded in Vancouver, Canada, to over sixty countries. She has had solo exhibits with the Carnegie Museum in Oxnard, Buenaventura Gallery in Ventura and Nomad Gallery in Ojai. With numerous awards, she has been a finalist in The Artist's Magazine national arts competitions, with top prizes at the Santa Paula Art Exhibit and Carnegie Museum "Classic Competition." Loehr is represented in the municipal collection of the City of San Buenaventura.

Christopher Zsarnay

Chris has been on the forefront of innovative Commercial Photography since graduating from Brooks Institute of Photography in 1988. Since 1990 Chris has owned and operated Z-Studios, a Commercial Photography Studio located in Ventura, CA. His work encompasses a wide range of styles and projects for local, national and international clients.

Rex Kochel - Our Juror

Rex is an artist who lives in Ojai, California. His artwork spans over 30 years, beginning as an instructor at Ventura High School before he retired in 2004. A long time member of both the Buenaventura Art Association and the Santa Barbara Art Association, he was juried into the prestigious Ojai Studio Arts group upon his retirement after 34 years

in public education as a classroom instructor and basketball coach.

Soon after retirement Rex was commissioned by Remax to supply artwork for their new building in Ventura. He finished 54 paintings that are part of their permanent collection.

Rex has had his work displayed in Avalon, Catalina Island at C.C. Gallaghers, but has focused his most recent work on locations where he has traveled with the new found time as an educator retiree. The works displayed on his web site reflect Rex's travels in Mexico, Peru, Panama, Argentina, as well as a large amount of time spent painting in San Francisco in addition to painting in his home locale of Ventura County, California. Website: kochelart.com