

Sherry Loehr - Oil & Watercolor Judge

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.

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.

Gail Pidduck - Oil & Watercolor Judge

As an art student in Utah I often wished that I could show the California I knew to fellow students. California to them was urban, Los Angeles or the Bay Area. To me it was fields of zinnias or corn on foggy summer mornings. I now have the opportunity to paint my California. It is my desire to have my paintings help viewers see the importance of our rural treasure and the people who work within it.

Gail describes herself as a ruralist painter. Born and raised on a ranch in Santa Paula, Gail spent much of her youth exploring nearby fields and orchards. Pidduck's early experiences have greatly influenced her perspective as an artist. She is inspired by both the large and small parts of nature in her home area. Her works feature sweeping views of mountains and valleys, and smaller studies of birds, cacti, flowers, and fruit. gailpidduck.com.

Donna Granata - Our Photography Judge

Donna joined the Brooks Institute faculty in September 2006. She is a 1993 graduate from Brooks Institute and in 2003 was honored by her alma mater with an Honorary Masters of Science Degree. As an award winning painter turned photographer, Granata is admired for her portrait work. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Focus on the Masters (FOTM), a highly respected non-profit educational program documenting many of the contemporary artists of our time. Founded in 1994, the goal of FOTM is to demonstrate the importance of the arts to society by bringing highly accomplished artists to the forefront of the community. The program presents its research to a broad public through regular photographic exhibitions; oral histories; meet-the-artist series; educational outreach to schools and youth centers; lecture series; and cable access programming. Focus on the Masters is the recipient of the inaugural City of Ventura Mayor's Art Award in 2005 in recognition of its outstanding contributions to arts education. Selected works from Granata's FOTM portrait series and other photographs are housed in numerous public and private collections including the Carnegie Art Museum, Oxnard, CA; City of Ventura Municipal Art Collection, Ventura, CA; Museum Ventura County, Ventura, CA; Ojai Valley Museum, Ojai, CA; the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission; Santa Barbara, CA; Polaroid Corporation, Cambridge, MA; Smithsonian Archive of American Artists; George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; and additional public institutions that house the personal archives of the artists documented. Her photographs have been displayed throughout Santa Barbara, Ventura and Los Angeles counties and in selected shows in New York, Chicago, and Las Vegas.

Visit her website at www.focusonthemasters.com.

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. Rex's Website: kochelart.com