

CHARLES CAMPBELL GALLERY

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Channing Peake Biography

Channing Peake began his life in Marshall, Colorado, in the year 1910, and rounded out his life as one of Santa Barbara's most important and prolific artists and active citizens.

In a note he wrote from an exhibition at the University of Illinois, he was "...fortunate to have as a teacher..." the acclaimed photographer, Barbara Morgan. It was this same Ms. Morgan who, with great foresight and intention, entered her student's work, unbeknownst to him, into a contest for a scholarship to the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California. The school awarded a scholarship to one outstanding high school art student from Southern California and one from Northern California. Peake, the artist, was also a sportsman and had been awarded a scholarship to play football at the University of Southern California (USC). According to his grandson, Gio Rossilli, he was faced with the dilemma of choosing a path --- art or sports. Peake decided to follow his calling as an artist, and spent two years studying at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. Awarded a consecutive scholarship, Peake continued studying art for two more years at the Santa Barbara School of Fine Arts.

During this time, he became highly intrigued by the re-emerging medium of the fresco mural. Following his studies at the Santa Barbara School of Fine Arts, Peake spent a year traveling and documenting varied aspects of life throughout Mexico and worked as an apprentice on the mural at the National Palace in Mexico City with the prominent fresco muralist Diego Rivera.

After studying with Rivera, he moved to New York City. There he was active in the Art Students League of New York with, among others, Jackson Pollock and Rico Lebrun. The Art Students League was formed by forward-thinking artists who had become disenchanted by the conservative instruction available to them at traditional schools. At the Arts Students League, they could design their own course of study and get the instruction they desired. Part of Peake's attraction to the Art Students League was the freedom it provided him to experiment with a variety of mediums in his search for new ways to interpret the world around him.

While at the Art Students League, Peake was twice selected from among the students there for projects sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA); both projects were major fresco mural undertakings.

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In 1936, Peake was chosen by Lewis Rubenstein to assist on Rubenstein's mural at the Germanic Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 1936. From 1936-1938, Peake assisted Rico Lebrun on his mural for the Pennsylvania Station in New York City. During his career, Peake completed other major mural commissions the art of murals including the Climax Molybdenum Company, New York (1937); The Don Quixote Mural in the Santa Barbara Public Library Mural(1959); The Santa Barbara Biltmore Mural (1978-79); and the Santa Barbara El Paseo Mural (1984-1985), which is owned by the county of Santa Barbara.

By 1940, Peake had returned to Santa Barbara to paint and have a studio for two decades on a working cattle and horse ranch in the Santa Ynez Valley, just north of the city. Channing Peake became a prominent figure in the county of Santa Barbara. In fact, Charles Donelan of the Arts Scene claims that had Peake not existed and impacted the arts of the city that "Santa Barbara would surely have had to invent him." (Arts Scene, December 26, 2003).

Peake's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums both nationally and internationally. In 1950, Peake had his first solo exhibition at the Frank Perls Gallery. Among the artists Perls represented were Picasso, Chagall, Matisse, Tamayo, O'Keefe and Modigliani. Over the years, the Frank Perls Gallery had several one-person exhibitions for Peake.

Other gallery exhibits of Peake's work include:

- Faulkner Memorial Art Gallery, group exhibition, Santa Barbara, CA (1932),
- Palos Verdes Gallery, solo exhibit, Palos Verdes, CA (1948)
- Gallery of Mid-20th Century Art, Los Angeles, CA (1948)
- Von Romberg Gallery, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara Art Museum, Santa Barbara, CA (1951)
- Downtown Gallery, group exhibition, New York (1955)
- Jacques Seligman Gallery, New York (1956, 1957)
- Paul Sargent Gallery, Charleston, Illinois (1958-1959)
- Feingarten Gallery, solo exhibit, San Francisco, CA (1959)
- Gallery Zak, solo exhibit, Paris (1960)
- Felix Landau Gallery, Los Angeles (1962)
- UCLA Art Galleries, Los Angeles (1962)
- Esther Bear Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA (1962, 1964, and 1970, solo exhibit)
- Knoedler & Co. Gallery, Paris (1962)
- Willard Gallery, solo exhibit, New York (1963)

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Gallery exhibitions (continued):

- Laguna Art Association Gallery, Laguna, CA (1966)
- Toninelli Gallery, solo exhibit, Rome (1969)
- Mary Moore Gallery, La Jolla, CA (1971 and 1972 -- solo exhibit and 1987 – group exhibition)
- Enholm Gallery, Dallas, Texas (1971)
- Chelsea Galleries, solo exhibit, Venice, CA (1976)
- Gallery 8, Claremont, CA (1976 -- solo exhibit, and 1978 – group exhibition)
- Maxwell Gallery, San Francisco, CA (1977)
- Lillian Nall Gallery, Nevada (1977)
- Bradley Gallery, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara, CA (1978)
- Windrush Gallery, Sedona, Arizona (1981)
- Meredith Niles Gallery, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara, CA (1981)
- De la Guerra Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA (1983 and 1985 -- solo exhibits, and 1999)
- Kimble Gallery, solo exhibit, Fullerton, CA (1987)
- Village Gallery, Montecito, CA (1990)
- Bartoli Studio, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara, CA (1999)
- Sullivan Goss, Ltd., solo exhibit, Montecito, CA (2000)
- Maienza-Wilson Gallery, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara, CA (2003)
- Toby C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles (2003)
- Channing Peake Gallery, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara, CA (2004)

Exhibitions at institutions:

- 9th Annual Exhibition – Artists West of the Mississippi, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (1947)
- Artists Equity Show, Associated American Artists Galleries, Beverly Hills, CA (1949)
- University of Illinois Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, Urbana Illinois (1953 and 1955)
- First Pacific Coast Biennial Exhibition of paintings and watercolors, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and California Palace of the Legion of Honor (1955)
- Second Pacific Coast Biennial Exhibition of paintings and watercolors, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Seattle Art Museum, Portland Art Museum (1957)
- 11th Annual Art Show, solo exhibit, San Luis Obispo, CA (1957)
- 16th Annual Exhibition – Artists West of the Mississippi, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (1957)
- Carnegie International Exhibition, Pittsburgh, Illinois (1958)

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Exhibitions at institutions (continued):

- Exhibition of Drawings by Old Masters and Modern, Scripps College, CA (1959)
- Tucson Art Center, Tucson, Arizona (1959)
- Lompoc Valley Art Association, solo exhibit, Lompoc, CA (1983)
- “The Barns of Santa Barbara County – Documented in historical & contemporary paintings & photographs”, County of Santa Barbara Betteravia Gallery, Santa Maria, CA (1999)
- “Implementations: Farm Machinery & Other Images of Ranch Life – Paintings & Works on Paper by three renowned Santa Barbara artists: Channing Peake, Rico Lebrun & Howard Warshaw”, County of Santa Barbara Channing Peake Gallery, CA (1999-2000) and the County of Santa Barbara Betteravia Gallery, Santa Maria, CA (2000)
- County of Santa Barbara Channing Peake Gallery – 15th Anniversary, solo exhibit, Santa Barbara, CA (2004)

Museums throughout the country were also great proponents of Peake’s work. The Germanic Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, exhibited Lewis Rubenstein’s murals in 1937, which Peake had assisted him with. The Pasadena Art Institute’s Gallery was one of the first to take-up Peake’s work in 1948 and 1949 – solo exhibit, along with the Santa Barbara Museum of Art 1947, 1953, 1954 – solo exhibit, 1955-57, 1974, 1975 – solo exhibit, 1989, 1997 and 1999.

In 1958, Peake exhibited both in the Downey Museum of Art, Downey, CA, and the Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA. The Witte Memorial Museum in San Antonio, Texas, and the Springfield Art Museum in Springfield, Missouri, both exhibited his work in 1959.

Many other museums followed suit, including:

- Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1950, 1955 and 1956)
- Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Oregon (1958, 1964 -- solo exhibit and 1966)
- DeYoung Museum, San Francisco (1957)
- Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C. (1957)
- Seattle Museum of Art (1958)
- Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York (1978)
- Santa Maria Museum Art Center, Santa Maria, CA (1993)
- Elverhoj Museum, Solvang, CA (1993 -- solo exhibit and 2000 – group exhibition)
- Wildling Art Museum, Los Olivos, CA (2003)