



Stop the Sun as it Rises!

*Paint down and dusk
and into the quiet
of earth's shadow, night.*

*Paint moon and stars
then grab winds of midday.
Chase clouds, lift mists
and face the driving rain.*

*Walk in melting snow
climb mountains
and run with tumbling brooks.
Ride rivers to the sea
sink with the sun
below the waters.*

*Look with me – West
listen to your voice within.
Struggle to be true
to the Nature in yourself.*

*Weave the fabric of each work
like a spider –
Make it function!
Make it strong!
Make it.*

*“The way to do – is to be”
Do it –
Do it well
Do it right for your
Felt idea – yours!*

Ray Strong

Ray Strong

Taking in the Landscape

For me the realist's discipline, "to paint it just as you saw it," had its early origins in Oregon, where I was a youthful admirer of Winslow Homer. He helped me understand that painting is a mental thing, in addition to all the other trade skills one has to master. Therefore, almost since the beginning of my efforts, when I painted mountains I sought to get their depth, their weight, and their impact by putting mind behind my brush to feel the function of nature's ways. I sought the substance of it all, not the surface facts.

From "The Art of the Diorama" by Ray Strong

When asked, "Why do you paint?" Ray Strong once replied, "To live through the eye and from the experience - pursuing the landscape - and to pass it on, so others can enjoy that same fullness of life." That fullness of life will be displayed in force during "Ray Strong: Taking in the Landscape," a retrospective that will run through May 2, 2005.

A landmark event, the Strong exhibit honors the artist on the occasion of his 100th birthday (January 3, 2005). The show features over 80 paintings spanning the entire 80 years of his career, from the 1920s to the present. His early paintings will occupy the two rooms of the Museum Changing Gallery, while more recent work will be displayed in the Bird Habitat Hall alongside the spectacular dioramas he painted in the 1960s.

Many of the paintings in this exhibit belong to the Strong Family Trust, and some have never before been shown to the public. Director of Exhibits Brian Weber promises that visitors will be surprised by the artist's diversity of techniques and breadth of subject matter.

Weber observes, "In Santa Barbara, we tend to think of Ray's art as his paintings of the Southern California landscape. This show will include an abundance of lesser-known but impressive works from other geographic areas. There will be paintings from 'The Oregon Collection' that date from the 1930s-1950s, as well as paintings from the Eastern and Western Sierras, Monument Valley, Canyon de Chelly, and Marin."

The exhibit will also feature three short videos of Ray: one of him talking about his life, another about how he creates his art, and another about his dioramas.

Some call Ray Strong the dean of Santa Barbara landscape painters; some call him a living legend. By dedicating his life to the art of the landscape, he has made a vital contribution to the American realist tradition. His stand on the environment, his commitment to education, and his sincere love of people continue to endear him to the Santa Barbara community.

A Life in Art

Ray began painting at age eight in Corvallis, Oregon. He grew up on farms where he developed both his lifelong affinity for the landscape and his desire to capture it in art. His formal education consisted of studies with individual artists as well as stints at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and the Art Students League in New York.

In the 1930s, Ray joined Maynard Dixon and other artists in starting the Arts Students' League of San Francisco, and he also established his reputation as a painter of murals and dioramas. He participated in the Roosevelt Administration's WPA projects, painting dioramas at post offices, schools, and the California-Pacific and Golden Gate international expositions.

Ray liked to say that "the birds and the banks" brought him and his family to Santa Barbara. In 1960, he was commissioned to paint the diorama backgrounds for the Bird Habitat Hall at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, a three-year project. He also completed several paintings for Santa Barbara Savings and Loan.

Over the years, his passion and talent for teaching found many outlets. In 1965 he co-founded the Santa Barbara Institute of Arts, where he taught for eight years. He also taught in



the Adult Education program at Santa Barbara City College. In northern California, he co-founded the Mendocino Arts Center and taught at the College of Marin.

In 1985, Ray and his friend and fellow artist Arturo Tello founded the Oak Group, a *plein air* painting club for artists dedicated to preserving the open landscape. In addition to raising over \$1 million for environmental causes, this group has given younger artists an opportunity to paint regularly with Ray.

In 1992, Ray and his wife Elizabeth founded the Santa Barbara Art Students' League in cooperation with the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and fellow landscape artists. The League provides outreach programs, presentations, workshops, and exhibits for adults and for children in local schools.



During his lifetime, Ray has exhibited at galleries and museums throughout the United States, including the Macbeth Gallery in New York; Cowie Galleries in Los Angeles; Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.; De Young Museum, Palace of the Legion of Honor, Graves Galleries, and Maxwell Galleries in San Francisco; Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and The Easton Gallery in Montecito. His work is held in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution.

Ray currently lives with his daughter Barbara in Three Rivers, California, where he still paints every day and lives his credo: "To capture the gloriously living landscape of California in paint and poetry has been the life of my soul." ■



From top:

"Black Mountain"
Collection of Michael and Barbara Whitt

"Wedding Gift to Ethel and Kenneth" 1941
Collection of Ethel Strong Adams

"West Big Pine" 1962
(Field study for condor diorama)
Collection of Eric Hvalb0ll