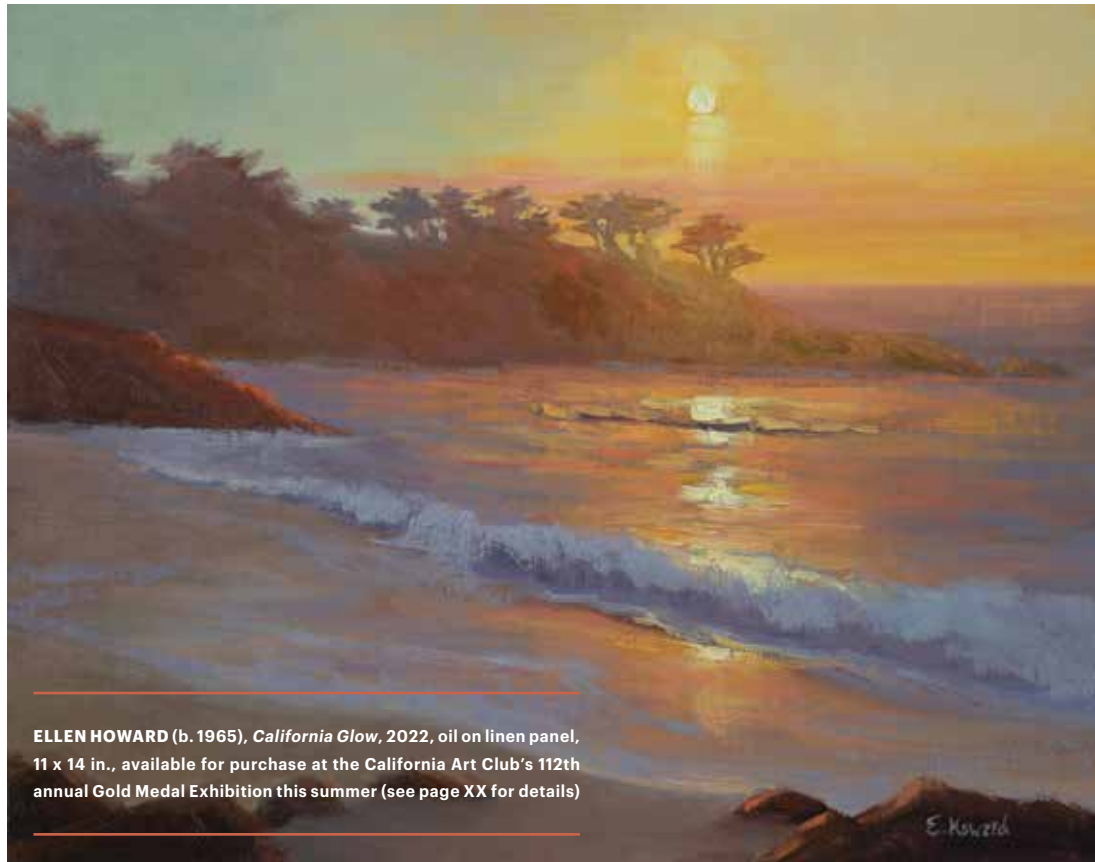


# FIVE TO WATCH

There is a lot of superb art being made these days.  
This column by Allison Malafronte shines light on five gifted individuals.



ELLEN HOWARD (b. 1965), *California Glow*, 2022, oil on linen panel, 11 x 14 in., available for purchase at the California Art Club's 112th annual Gold Medal Exhibition this summer (see page XX for details)

Sunsets are one of California painter **ELLEN HOWARD's** (b. 1965) specialties, and the luminous view illustrated here certainly captures her aptitude and enthusiasm for the subject. Currently second vice president of the California Art Club and formerly co-chair of its San Francisco chapter, she completed this scene during a picturesque drive from Carmel through Pebble Beach and on to Pacific Grove. "*California Glow* was created on that 17-mile drive near the Cypress Point Club, one of my favorite areas to paint," she shares. "I love the majestic row of cypress trees along the shoreline, especially at sunset. The warm light shines through these trees, casting a beautiful golden glow on the ocean."

An avid plein air painter who is partial to Northern California but has also followed nature's call up and down the Golden Coast, Howard is particularly passionate about creating scenes full of light, warmth, and natural beauty that uplift viewers' spirits and encourage feelings of calm. "I love walking alone in nature," the artist shared with writer and artist Molly Siple in a recent issue of the California Art Club's newsletter. "I gain clarity of what is really important to me and what I really want to paint. My collectors find tranquility in my work, and I'm so glad when they do. I want my paintings to convey a stillness that transports them to a soothing and peaceful place."

Howard came to the profession of fine artist in a roundabout but serendipitous way. An early career in finance, development, and venture capital served her well as she began volunteering in the art world in her

spare time. In 2009 she started curating exhibitions at Notre Dame de Namur University and then served as a member of the curatorial committee of the Peninsula Museum of Art. She began taking art classes and attending workshops, considering it a hobby at first, but then realizing that with regular commitment and practice it could become a second career. Today, Howard not only exhibits with numerous national and regional organizations, she is a teacher herself, sharing what she has learned in both oil and gouache painting.

Upcoming engagements include a three-person show at Berkeley's Holton Studio Gallery titled *On the Threshold: Ellen Howard, Tia Kratter and Kim Lordier*. On view from July 22 through August 26, this exhibition showcases how three women using three different media are making new breakthroughs. "The threshold of each new season is a space in time to look at what has been and what's to come," Howard explains. "These works represent my creative journey, from the quiet dormancy of winter to the exuberance of spring, the vitality of summer, and the warm comforts of fall. Painting through the seasons allows me to boldly embrace change and listen deeply with intention to my creative calling."

**HOWARD** is represented by three galleries in California: *Rieser Fine Art* (Carmel), *Holton Studio Gallery* (Berkeley), and *Bird Dogs Arts* (Arvin).



**OFELIA ANDRADES** (b. 1982), *Alegoria VI*, 2020, oil on linen, 55 x 67 in., available through the artist

**OFELIA ANDRADES** (b. 1982) is a Chilean artist who is gaining ever more recognition throughout the field of contemporary realism. Her large, complex compositions are painted with classical precision and technique, and often employ *chiaroscuro* effects for increased drama. Velázquez, Caravaggio, and Rembrandt are the types of masters who have clearly been an influence on this painter's approach.

Andrades's inclination toward art was evident from childhood. She attended workshops from an early age, learning various approaches to both drawing and painting. Her formal training began at the Experimental Art School, where she earned a technical degree in painting and graphic design. Next she attended the University of Chile, where she completed a Bachelor's degree in visual arts. A two-year stay in London found Andrades refining her skills and expanding her education further, and when she returned to Chile in 2014, she continued painting and teaching there.

Andrades pursues allegory and symbolism in her multi-figure compositions, often communicating messages with psychological and philosophical overtones. "The world of representation has always

been fascinating to me," she says. "Oftentimes I imagine what it's like to be inside the painting, to become one with the painting. Therefore, I am usually in the composition as one of the subjects; it's generally autobiographical. I especially like to explore the world of symbolism around the feminine, as well as the psyche itself, the stages of life, and the drama of light and shadow in the psychological process. I like scenes that are suggestive and open, with an atmosphere charged with reverie, where reality and fiction are mixed and limits are lost. *Alegoria VI* is one such painting."

Andrades has exhibited throughout the world, including major museums and galleries, and has received several awards. Her paintings are in private and public collections, and she currently works in both Santiago (Chile) and Mexico City.

**ANDRADES** is represented in the U.S. by D Anthony (Wausau, Wisconsin) and is self-represented in Chile and Mexico.

One quality that makes a painter a true artist is the ability to see and capture aspects of life that others might overlook. Or, conversely, to have the ability to take something grand in nature and distill it to its core essence so that it can be communicated in two dimensions.

**DAMIEN M. GONZALES** (b. 1960) can do both.

For this Albuquerque-based landscape painter — who is often surrounded by stunning sunsets, rugged mountain terrain, and colorfully aged architecture — finding a paintable subject is not exactly detective work. But even during his travels elsewhere and everyday moments at home, he can tune in to the special qualities that make a scene unique. Take his painting *Mummy Cave*, for instance, which was painted from the canyon floor in Canyon del Muerto after a Navajo guide drove Gonzales about 14 miles into the ancient Anasazi ruins. He was given only one hour to set up and paint, but was able to quickly finish the sketch that was ultimately used to complete the final painting.

In another scene, *Candil*, Gonzales looked west from his backyard one evening and saw the remnants of a large storm that was diminishing as the weather cooled. “It appeared to be resting on the horizon and looked like an oil lamp,” the artist says. “The idea for the painting rattled around in my head for many weeks until finally I got it out.”

In another storm painting, *Rose Thundercloud* (illustrated here), Gonzales managed to capture yet another seemingly implausible

scene in the sky. “This giant raincloud formed north of the Sandia Mountains over Placitas, New Mexico, on a hot summer afternoon,” he recalls. “During monsoon season, giant storms are spawned over certain locations where the earth is hotter than surrounding areas and the air is moist. They billow up, flatten out at around 40,000 feet, and form anvil heads. The new storm cloud forming in front of the mature thunderhead in the background is what really caught my eye, along with the scale.”

Having a sharp eye is clearly instinctive for this self-taught painter of the Southwest, who also had the benefit of an ongoing mentorship with the established landscape painter Wilson Hurley (1924–2008). When Gonzales was 12, his father asked Hurley to critique his son’s drawings and paintings. This became a tradition over the next several decades; the young artist would check in periodically with Hurley, who happily offered advice and direction. Nevertheless, Gonzales decided to pursue a career in mechanical engineering, which he did successfully for many decades. Now retired, he is free to dedicate himself to his first love full-time.

**GONZALES** is self-represented.

**DAMIEN M. GONZALES** (b. 1960), *Rose Thundercloud*, 2023, oil on mounted linen, 8 x 10 in., available through the Taos Art Museum at Fehin House (New Mexico)





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**HEATHER PERSONETT** (b. 1988),  
*Portrait of Justin*, 2020, clay,  
19 x 9 x 11 in., available through the  
artist

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Working as a freelance sculptor, mold-maker, and adjunct professor at several academies in New York City, **HEATHER PERSONETT** (b. 1988) stays active in her own Brooklyn studio and through an on-the-go lifestyle in the Big Apple. Recently she has been moving beyond capturing a physical likeness in favor of excavating beneath-the-surface emotional and spiritual content from those who sit for her.

Personett's prowess in this regard has earned awards, residencies, and commissions, including a recent First Place in the Salmagundi Club of New York's Library Portrait Sculpture Competition for her rendition of the great sculptor, and former Salmagundian, Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907).

"Saint-Gaudens was lauded as a thoughtful and gifted teacher who trained some of the finest American talents through his own artists' colony and other classical New York City institutions," Personett shares. "His work also carries the same tenderness and humanity that he himself possessed. I therefore aimed to create a portrait that embodied the sculptor he was while paying homage to his skill and delicacy of touch."

Personett's own skill and delicacy are apparent in the sculpture illustrated here, *Portrait of Justin*. Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, she invited fellow sculptor and friend Justin Kendall to work on their mutual goal of building stronger studio practices. "I was interested in working on a portrait study that went beyond the mere

copying of nature to delve into the realm of emotive portraiture," Personett says. "I am highly aware of the portrait's role as a record of how a person will be remembered long after they are gone, when there are no longer people around to describe who they were or how they lived. It's also a record of my own experience as the note-taker. What emerged here was a portrait that captured a depth of character within the eyes and an invitation to get to know the sitter more."

Personett earned her B.F.A. in illustration and animation from the State University of New York at Fredonia. She continued studying ceramics and sculpture, then went on to receive an M.F.A. in sculpture at the New York Academy of Art (NYAA). More recently, Personett worked as a portrait sculptor and freelance artist at Studio EIS in Brooklyn, under the tutelage of head sculptor Jiwoong Cheh. Today she is a sought-after teacher herself, and she relishes being connected to a community of students and fellow instructors through adjunct professorships at both NYAA and the Fashion Institute of Technology; she is also the lead sculpture instructor at the Grand Central Atelier. In these classrooms, she says, the inspiration and enrichment flow both ways.

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**PERSONETT** is self-represented.

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MILES CLEVELAND GOODWIN (b. 1980), *Beautiful Dying Man*, 2023, oil on linen, 24 x 18 in., Valley House Gallery (Dallas)

Few artists have the gumption to explore such weighty topics as death, destitution, and decay, but these are concepts about which Georgia-based painter **MILES CLEVELAND GOODWIN** (b. 1980) has much to say. With a B.F.A. in painting and printmaking from Portland's Pacific Northwest College of Art, and many years of additional self-education and practice, Goodwin paints in a contemporary realist manner sometimes compared to Southern Gothic, the literary genre focused on the shadowy, scarred side of Southern culture and history. He brings a heightened level of awareness and philosophical pondering to subjects some artists are afraid to touch.

Born and raised in the South, Goodwin can also put pen to paper to create another kind of artistry; we can detect a preoccupation with darkness and death even in his poetic descriptions of his upbringing. "My painting was born in the cypress swamps of Mississippi, where I was conceived, under a white heron's wing and a drunken parade," his artist's statement declares. "The stories of slaves and farming, the seasons burning with colors and feelings, that resignation to the idea

we were different. I found it later on the bottom of the Chattahoochee River, floating by a bible and a dream. Those brown waters against the warmth of fall leaves would ignite my love for expressionism and poetry."

He continues, "The American South is hauntingly beautiful; it could supply a person novels, paintings, and songs for eternity. In winter the mountains were on fire with white. White against dark wiry cedars, against the black of my paint. And in the summer endless patches of Queen Anne's lace, chimney swifts flying just below the old train bridges, the shimmer of brown trout at the surface of the cold river waters. In fall the maples melted between the old brick and wood of abandoned churches. I could start to hear mice in the walls, horses in their stalls

fattening up, a whisper of death."

One of Goodwin's most recent paintings is the eerily compelling *Beautiful Dying Man*. Many of his works explore old age and isolation, and here an elderly man figures prominently, this time — we gather from the title — on the brink of death. In Goodwin's depictions, passing on is a struggle and strain, one that strips us of dignity and humanity. The man here is naked, and his posture suggests resignation and dejection. To his left is a dog, likely a longtime companion, who seems to be sleeping or dead, and there is a shadowy man lurking in the mirror; one would assume the spirit of death. Why then does Goodwin call him a beautiful dying man if no indication of hope is entertained? As in many of his creations, there is thought-provoking irony in the dichotomy and parallels he sets up and asks us to consider.

**GOODWIN** is represented by Valley House Gallery (Dallas) and Anima Mundi Gallery (Cornwall, UK).