

Join artists for a day of jazz, wine, sun and fun

by Ed Penniman

As you drive down Ocean View Avenue in Santa Cruz, the sunlight casts dappled patterns through heritage trees that grace the front yards of stately Victorian homes. The street has many restored houses that each sit on about one acre. The Penniman family home, at 235 Ocean View Avenue, is one of these and is the sight of my "Open Studio" this year. The view encompasses a panorama from the trestle over the San Lorenzo River to the hills of the University of California, up and behind the new steeple of the Holy Cross Church.

I've been holding an Open Studio in my mother's front yard for four years. I'm a "plein air" painter, so my studio is the great outdoors. This courtesy she extends me, and several other artists who will be showing with me, affords the public a rare treat. You may get closer than usual to one of these grand old homes.

This year I will be sharing the front yard with Ed Teitcher and Claudia Ramm, a plein air painter and a ceramic artist, respectively.

In the middle of the yard is a large round lawn where various refreshments, wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Along the sides of the yard, mature ash, magnolia, redwood and other trees shade long strips of lawn where we will display a real variety of work.

On Sunday, October 17, a live acoustic group will play "straight ahead" jazz. I plan to paint an original piece during the event, so people can see how I work. Anyone really interested in learning about watercolor may sign up for one of my semi-annual watercolor classes. The six-week class for beginners covers materials and methods, drawing and composition, value, color, technique and more. The class is designed so that students can take off on their own and be equipped with a solid painting foundation.

One of the fun things about Open Studio is sharing my painting experiences. Here's a story about one of my farm paintings.

I was driving through the Indiana countryside for several hours and spotted what I thought was a classic midwestern farm-



photo by Greg Pio

Ed Penniman works outside the family homestead.

house, with barns and a scattering of out buildings. The old place was abandoned so I pulled in the driveway between the stately home and its weathered two-story barn.

I set up my equipment and started to paint. I painted a view of the barn for several hours and noticed a long row of rural mailboxes behind me along the road. I also noticed that I was getting some rather long looks from people coming to pick up their mail.

I figured sooner or later I would get a visit from the owner or the local sheriff, so I just kept on painting. It was no more than 20 minutes before a well-seasoned one-ton pickup truck, with an equally weather-worn but very robust farmer arrived and asked, "What the hell are you up to?"

If ever a person deserved the "Silver Tongue Award" it was I. I said I was a California watercolor artist and had been driving around looking for the classic midwestern farm to paint. I told him, and it was the truth, that this place was the nicest I'd seen and that I really had to paint it...and by the way, did he know the history of the place?

Well, that's all it took. He told me it was the Phillips family farm, that he was born and raised there, that it had three hundred acres of corn at one time. It was the oldest farm in the area. He seemed to let his guard down. He gave me a twisted grin and said it was OK with him for me to do a painting of the farm, but he had to go.

Well, about 20 minutes passed and I was just starting to get back into the groove, when the pickup came back. Old Mr.

Phillips arrived with his wife, an apple pie, two six-packs of beer, a couple of aluminum lawn chairs and a portable TV that his wife wouldn't let him turn on. I took a welcome break, had some beer and pie. Not a bad combo, actually. As we yakked about my painting trip, neighbors started to arrive with fortifications. It seems that word was out that a California artist was painting a picture of the old Phillips place. Within another half hour we were engaged in one heck of a party.

As a gesture of my appreciation, I gave Mr. and Mrs. Phillips a very nice "study" that I had done. It was quick, direct and captured the "essential farm."

It is this type of interaction that makes painting outdoors so attractive. It is also fun to share my paintings with people whether they acquire one or not. I find studio painting constricting, and in the winter I long for sunny days. Often, when it's raining, I go out and paint in my car. It's big enough to do a half-sheet very comfortably.

Please accept my invitation to visit me and my fellow artists at this year's Open Studio Tour. This year's catalog, available at Lenz Arts or Palace Art Supply, has the work of hundreds of talented artists with whom you may visit.

I also recommend that you attend the "Preview Exhibit" at the Santa Cruz Art League. It runs through October 24. This is sure to give you an opportunity to save some legwork, time, and enable you to focus on who you'd really like to visit.

Open Studios runs October 9-10 (North County), October 16-

17 (South County), and the encore weekend of October 23-24. For additional information about the Open Studio Tour, contact the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County at 688-5399.

Ed Penniman, a resident of Soquel, is a nationally recognized graphic designer and paints in watercolor. "Local Sketches" is a showcase for area artists who have a unique style.

MEMO

Don't Miss Open Studio!
It's a County Wide Party!!

Kitty Wallis

729 Bay St.
Santa Cruz, CA
95060

Participating Artist #180

craft gallery

Mousebreath,
Fuzz Butt,
Attack Cat,
Tuna Lips...

Sushi Breath

capitola village
one block from the beach
475-4466

mon-sat 10-9pm
sunday til 7pm