

Santa Ysabel Art Gallery

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SANTA YSABEL, CA . . .

PAINTER JAMES AITCHISON TO EXHIBIT AT SANTA YSABEL ART GALLERY

At Santa Ysabel Art Gallery, April 30 through June 5, 2016 will be *Detours*, a one person exhibit featuring the paintings of well known Southern California contemporary artist James Aitchison. Opening Reception for the exhibit is Saturday, April 30, 4 - 8 pm. Admission is free. The public is invited.

James Aitchison's paintings are as colorful as his high ceilinged, dark chrome yellow studio in Leucadia, where he paints amid a jungle of very large finished and in progress canvases. Aitchison is a painter who works mainly with oil paints, although he does use a wide range of materials, including acrylic, encaustic and various print techniques. He says that his work primarily involves the figure and often contains narrative elements. In his pursuit of story, Aitchison, an admirer of myth and the poetic, will often borrow images from mythology and from the language of poets that he admires, incorporating them in his work.

Although he is known primarily for his large paintings, there is just one larger painting in the *Detours* exhibit, a painting that found its inspiration and title from a gorgeous poem titled *If The Owl Calls Again* by the poet John Haines. This large painting kind of functions as an artist's mirror and is in itself worth coming to the Aitchison show for. There will be racetrack paintings in the exhibit that the artist has been making lately. These Aitchison says are stemming from a childhood spent at the track with his father and, as a result of these trips, drawing the horses and their jockeys. In addition to these racetrack pieces, many of the smaller paintings that will be on display in *Detours* carry an implied narrative and were inspired by the historical photographs of Edward S. Curtis, William Soule and Joseph K. Dixon. They are what Aitchison call "conversations" that he has had

with Native Americans.

Aitchison's development as an artist owes a debt to a childhood spent in the desert in the 40's and 50's near Palm Springs, where he grew up, imaginatively drawing in cool corners to escape the heat. Other influences that he remembers are an 8th grade art teacher who insisted he go see a traveling Van Gogh exhibit in Los Angeles (a life defining experience for him), and a summer studying painting as a teen at Idylwild's ISOMATA art school with New York artist Harry Sternberg, who became an advisor and lifelong friend. Later Aitchison studied at Chouinard Art Institute and the La Jolla Art Center. The 1960's were an exciting time in this country for art and art school students and this was another important factor during Aitchison's formative years as a young painter.

James Aitchison has participated in many group exhibits and has had one person shows at the Riverside Art Museum and at Boehm Gallery at Palomar College. He has taught painting through museums and through the California state correctional system. Aitchison has also been active at the curatorial level and was curator of "Chouinard: A Living Legacy, the Middle Years, 1949-1960" at The Oceanside Museum of Art in California.

Santa Ysabel Art Gallery is located at 30352 Highway 78 at Highway 79 in Santa Ysabel, seven miles below Julian. Admission to the gallery is free. Gallery hours are Thursday through Monday, 11AM - 5 PM, and by appointment. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday. For more information call 760.765.1676.