Featured Work: *Three Generations*

William V. Cahill was born in 1878 in Syracuse, NY. He studied illustration at the Art Students League in New York City, maintained a studio in Woodstock, NY, and shared another studio in Boston, MA with John Hubbard Rich. In 1914, Cahill and Rich traveled to California together with the intention of exhibiting their paintings and establishing the School for Illustration and Painting in Los Angeles. Cahill and Rich successfully opened the school and taught there, but it closed after three years.

While in Southern California, Cahill also taught at studios in Pasadena, Hollywood, and Laguna Beach. Author and art historian Nancy Moure wrote about the Laguna Beach artist enclave of the early to mid-1900s. "In the summer of 1918 there were between thirty and forty artists in Laguna
Beach. The permanent population of about fifteen was swelled by regular summer artists as well as by those attending William Cahill's summer class. The town, with a total citizenry of about 300, consisted of a hotel, a post office and a store, with board-and-batten cottages strung out to the north and south for a mile or two. Roads were dirt. Arch Beach had neither electricity nor natural gas, and there was only one telephone.” Cahill briefly taught drawing and painting at the University of Kansas in 1918, but by the following summer he was back in his studio in Laguna Beach. He and wife, Katharine, moved to San Francisco in 1920.

That same year, Los Angeles Times art critic Antony Anderson described Cahill as “among the strongest and most progressive of our Los Angeles painters, with every indication that he will ultimately—and probably at no very distant day—rise to the very top. I give him this praise because I feel him to be an artist of absolute sincerity, of true ideals in painting and with a firm grasp on the realities that the building upon them of a beautiful superstructure is, as I have intimated, only a matter of time.” Just four years later, the artist was dead at age 46.

Chicago Tribune art critic Eleanor Jewett, writing in 1924, described Cahill’s works as “radiant paintings” in which “light apparently shines through the pigment.” This radiance is evident in Three Generations (1896/1924), pictured above. Erin Stout, curatorial and research associate at IMCA, observes that Cahill's “impressionistic treatment of light and color in this work infuses the space with a sense of airiness, cheer, and restfulness. Vibrant colors bounce around the room, dotting the space with purples, yellows, pinks, and greens, causing the figures’ hair, skin, and garments to shimmer with color.”

Moure further reflected on Cahill's career in the Spring 1975 (Vol. 57, No. 1) issue of Southern California Quarterly. “It is unfortunate that Cahill received so few contemporary notices about his life or artistic goals because his work shows he was worthy of much more publicity than he received. Although he was professionally an illustrator, it will probably be his paintings, achieved through experimentation with impressionist techniques, that will prove to be more important.”

IMCA is pleased to include William Cahill’s Three Generations in its collection. The painting is on view in the exhibition Radiant Impressions alongside Interior, The Artist's Home (circa 1920s) by John Hubbard Rich, on loan from a private collection courtesy of Kelley Gallery.
On Color

Color can be used to focus attention, lead a viewer’s eye through a painting, or evoke moods and feelings. Impressionist painters are known for their exploration of color in the world around them.

The color wheel dates back to the 18th century and is still used today in classrooms to show students how colors work together. The wheel, of which there are several versions, is a circular diagram of colors arranged roughly in order of their appearance in the spectrum. Most color wheels include three primary colors, three secondary colors, and six tertiary colors. Colors that are found opposite each other on the wheel are defined as complementary and contrast the most with each other. For example, blue and orange, or red and green. Groups of three similar colors positioned next to each other are described as analogous.

For Josef Albers, the 20th-century German-American artist, theorist, and educator, color was a subject of lifelong fascination. He argued that the “rules of thumb of complementaries” can be “worn out” and shouldn’t be relied upon. He said, “What counts here—first and last—is not so-called knowledge of so-called facts, but vision—seeing.” Albers proposes that before considering theory, it is important to learn how to first see color. His influential book, Interaction of Color (1963), records his investigations with students and emphasizes that each individual’s experience of color is subjective—few people see the same red, for instance, when asked to picture the color in their mind’s eye. Further, perceiving color also depends on how it is lit or applied, where it is positioned in relationship to other colors, what it conjures from memory, personal experience, or mood. Katharina Cichosch wrote about Albers for Schirn Mag: “Albers worked according to the principle of interaction: To him, his students were valid partners in researching colors on a par with artistic colleagues and art theorists. Of all his artworks, Homage to the Square from 1959 is probably the best known—this composition of colorful, interlocked squares is another invitation to
the observer to discover the interaction of the relevant colors in a continually unvarying form with his or her own eyes.”

Artist Odili Donald Odita wrote about Albers’ *Interaction of Color* for Artsy: “Each chapter reads as a simple, step-by-step process of instruction and exercises to convey the interrelatedness of color. In the process, Albers eschews a ‘master narrative,’ and instead allows for other voices to speak and be heard. He strives for a community of others to voice their collective truth as they work through a series of color problems. . . . [the book] also addresses the conditionality of color, how color can exist in our imagination, and when color is communicated, how it can get lost in translation. This leads to the question of whether color is only relative to given situations. Albers smartly instructs that color is more than passive; he states in so many examples that color is interactive, and it can be determined and purposely activated when the group comes together to reason through what it sees. Additionally, it disavows a single, overarching reading.”

Mabel Alvarez (1891 – 1985)

I want to take all this beauty and pour it out on canvas with such radiance that all who are lost in the darkness may feel the wonder and lift to it.
– Mabel Alvarez, from a 1918 diary entry

Mabel Alvarez, the youngest of five children, was born November 28, 1891 on Oahu, HI. Her family moved to California in 1906 and settled in Berkeley, but then relocated to Los Angeles in 1909. Alvarez attended Los Angeles High School where her art teacher, Edwin McBurney, recognized her artistic talent and placed her in advanced design and drawing classes.
In 1915, she enrolled in William Cahill’s classes at the School for Illustration and Painting. “When Cahill moved from Los Angeles to Laguna Beach, [Alvarez] sought and found a new mentor in the revolutionary modernist Stanton MacDonald-Wright. Studying with him through much of the 1920s, she produced strongly colored, solid works. She also became a close friend of Morgan Russell, who, together with MacDonald-Wright, founded the Synchromist movement . . .” (Maurine St. Gaudens, Emerging from the Shadows, Vol. 1). Synchromism is based on the idea that color and sound are similar phenomena and that the colors in a painting can be orchestrated in the same harmonious way that a composer arranges notes in a symphonic work.

“My idea of painting,” Alvarez revealed in a 1928 diary entry “is so different now from the formless idea of it I had when I started. . . . With Bill [Cahill] we learned to paint in the Impressionistic manner with broken color. We were never allowed to use black. As I remember he limited us at that time to red, yellow and blue. I struggled for months with the ‘direct’ method—a most difficult process. . . . When I started painting for myself alone, I gradually forgot all ‘methods’ in my interest in getting the feeling of things I wanted to do. . . . Then came the study in color and drawing with Macdonald-Wright. That opened up a whole new world. I haven’t come to the end of it yet.” (Mabel Alvarez papers, 1898 – 1987, Archives of American Art)

Alvarez was the subject of a major solo exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum in 1941 and a retrospective at the Orange County Museum of Art in 1999, the latter curated by art historian Will South. Her work is held in many private and public collections, including the Bernice P. Bishop Museum (Honolulu, HI), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (CA), and Orange County Museum of Art (Santa Ana, CA).

IMCA is pleased to include Still Life (1916 – 1917), a significant early work by Alvarez, in its collection.
Watch Art21’s Playlist: “The Anarchic Potential of Color”

“Bright and busy to the cusp of chaotic, the color employed by the artists in these films can’t be contained by a traditional palette. Instead, the hues fill compositions and entire walls to express the artist’s larger ideas, using color as a starting point to explore notions of memory, space, identity, and more. Inspired by colors found throughout their surroundings, these artists fuse multiple influences to illuminate new ideas. The melding and merging of hues can serve as both a means and an end in abstract compositions, but many of these artists go beyond painting, using light, found objects, and even pollen to infuse their works with color.” —From Art21
Upon entering IMCA’s current exhibition, Radiant Impressions, visitors are greeted by a strong representation of works by Guy Rose, including Lifting Fog (1916), pictured above. These paintings provide an introduction to and framework for the central premise of the exhibition—the way painters have used light to convey ambiance and emotion in landscapes, portraiture, and depictions of everyday life. Many artists embraced Impressionism as an opportunity to exhibit their skill in rendering the interplay of light and color. They were interested in the science of optics, especially the way colors are formed by light acting on the eye. Rose is often considered to be an exemplary representative of California Impressionism due to his well-developed, signature style and his direct connection to French Impressionism. He studied in Paris and lived in an artist colony in Giverny associated with Claude Monet.

Guy Rose was born March 3, 1867 in San Gabriel, CA. He graduated from Los Angeles High School in 1884 and moved to San Francisco where he studied art at the School of Design. In 1888, Rose enrolled at the Académie Julian in Paris, the city where seven years later he married Ethel Boardman. The couple lived and traveled between France and the US for many years, but returned
to California in October 1914 and made Pasadena their home. Sadly, Rose suffered a paralyzing stroke in 1921, which curtailed his artistic career. He died on November 17, 1925.

In February 1916, Rose had his first one-person exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of Science, History and Art. Most of the 21 works on view were new paintings of the California coastline. Reviewing the show, arts writer Antony Anderson described Rose's affinity for seascapes for the Los Angeles Times. "Rose had never painted the sea till a year ago, and when he gazed upon the Pacific it must have been with a new and 'wild surmise' for he immediately sat himself down to paint it—and discovered he had come into his own."

According to curator Will South, "The artist had, in fact, painted the sea early in his career in San Francisco and had done coastal scenes while in France, but he turned his attention to the ocean beginning in late 1914 with a focus unknown in his earlier work. In painting the Pacific, Rose could indulge two of his major pictorial interests explored at Giverny: reflections on water and multifarious atmosphere. It also satisfied his personal penchant for creating images of solitude and quiet. In 1915 and 1916, he visited the Southern California beach communities of Laguna and Lo Jolla and painted the coastline with a complete command of the impressionistic strategies he had mastered at Giverny." (South, Will, Guy Rose: American Impressionist, 1995)

UCI Alumni Spotlight
Kim Abeles is, according to her website, an artist whose work examines “biography, geography, feminism, and the environment.” Her work speaks to society, science literacy, and civic engagement, and she has created projects with science and natural history museums, health departments, air pollution control agencies, the National Park Service, and non-profit organizations. Abeles received a BFA from Ohio University in 1974 and an MFA from University of California, Irvine in 1980.

In 1987, she innovated a method to create images from smog, and Smog Collectors brought her work to national and international attention. Kim Abeles: Smog Collectors, 1987 – 2020, curated by Jennifer Frias, will be on view at the Nicholas and Lee Begovich Gallery at California State
University Fullerton from September 18 - December 18, 2021. The National Endowment for the Arts funded her project *Valises for Camp Ground: Arts, Corrections, and Fire Management in the Santa Monica Mountains* (2017 – 2018) in collaboration with Camp 13, a group of female prison inmates who fight wildfires. The sculptural and instructional valises (pictured above left) are used by the National Park Service and County Fire Department to teach about fire prevention, national forests, and our relationship to nature.

Abeles’ most recent project, *Citizen Seeds*, consists of six permanent sculptures along the Park to Playa Trail in Los Angeles, a 13-mile series of connected trails that extends to the Pacific Ocean. According to the artist, “*Citizen Seeds* involves land use development and civic design, using the metaphor of the ‘seed’ as the poetic beginning of growth and the importance of this trail for the urban environment. . . . *Citizen Seeds* (pictured above right) are mixed media sculptures that portray six plants native to Southern California: Sugar Pine, California Black Oak, Coast Live Oak, Bladderpod, Black Walnut, and Manzanita. . . . *Citizen Seeds* combines the beauty of walking and the timeless experience it provides. . . . Through the years, walking, plotting areas, and incorporating cityscape horizons have been integral to my projects and community or classroom workshops. These projects offer participants a fresh point of view for a city that we normally pass quickly from our cars. When walking or stopping for a moment along a trail, we can imagine that there is no beginning or end, rather, a journey’s continuum.”

Abeles has received fellowships from the California Community Foundation, Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts, and Pollack-Krasner Foundation. Her work is held in many collections including Berkeley Art Museum (CA), Brooklyn Museum (NY), California African American Museum (Los Angeles, CA), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (CA), MOCA (Los Angeles, CA), and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (VA). Abeles’ process documents are archived at the Center for Art + Environment, Nevada Museum of Art.

Follow @kimabeles and check out Abeles’ *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* installation in downtown Los Angeles that served as an inspiration for a new collaboration between fashion designer Christian Louboutin and Idris and Sabrina Elba that supports Black activism and philanthropy.

IMCA is pleased to include Kim Abeles’ *The Migration of Thought* (2004) in its collection.
Staff Pick

Florence Arnold’s *Landscape* (1959), with its warm purple and brown hues, conveys a continuity between shadow and light, night and day, land and sky. Its geometric shapes resemble temples, radiating a sense of the sublime and infusing the work with a spiritual component. As someone born and raised in Central Europe, I am compelled by Arnold’s desert setting, so unlike anything I knew in my old life, at once evoking and contradicting the myth of the “New World.” What pulls me into this desert landscapes is the feeling of history it inspires, which is at odds with the settler narrative of California as a new and emerging space. It is impossible to look at rocks formed by millions of years of erosion and exposure to the elements and not get a sense of deep time, geological and human.

On a visceral level, the landscape serves as a visual reminder of history. Arnold’s juxtaposition of the ancient and the modern is a new take on an old theme, one she achieves through the abstract breakdown of the landscape into simplified shapes and colors. The painting’s generic title transcends locale, and its ordered and highly aestheticized portrayal of a complex space suggests tensions inherent in the American West.

Sara Černe
Interim Project Analyst and Executive Assistant, IMCA
Making Together: Color Walk
An activity designed for ages 5+, or younger with assistance

Practice paying attention to color in the real world—how you see it and how it makes you feel. American writer and artist William S. Burroughs often gave his students exercises to sharpen their perception as writers. He called one of these exercises “walking on colors” in his essay, “Ten Years and a Billion Dollars,” from The Adding Machine: Selected Essays (Arcade Publishing, 1993). Burroughs asked students to follow a color through a cityscape, encouraging them to see things they might otherwise have missed.

Gather Your Materials
Comfortable walking shoes
Optional: camera or sketchbook, colored pencils

Step x Step
Join Julie Delligueanti, Visitor Experience Manager at IMCA, on a color walk in this Making Together video where she demonstrates the activity below.

- Set aside some uninterrupted time.
- Venture outside. Begin your color walk anywhere. You might choose to walk in your neighborhood, through a museum or garden, or even your local hardware or grocery store.
- Plot your walk by looking for items of a certain hue. Let it be your guide and notice it in its full range of tints, tones, and shades. The word hue refers to the pure, unmixed
pigment families on the color wheel. In color theory, a **tint** is a hue with white added; a **tone** is a hue with neutral gray added; and a **shade** is a hue with black added.

- If you like, document your findings with a photograph or a sketch.

How did this activity change your experience of the place you walked, or of the color itself?

For more on color and color walks, check out this episode from Radiolab.