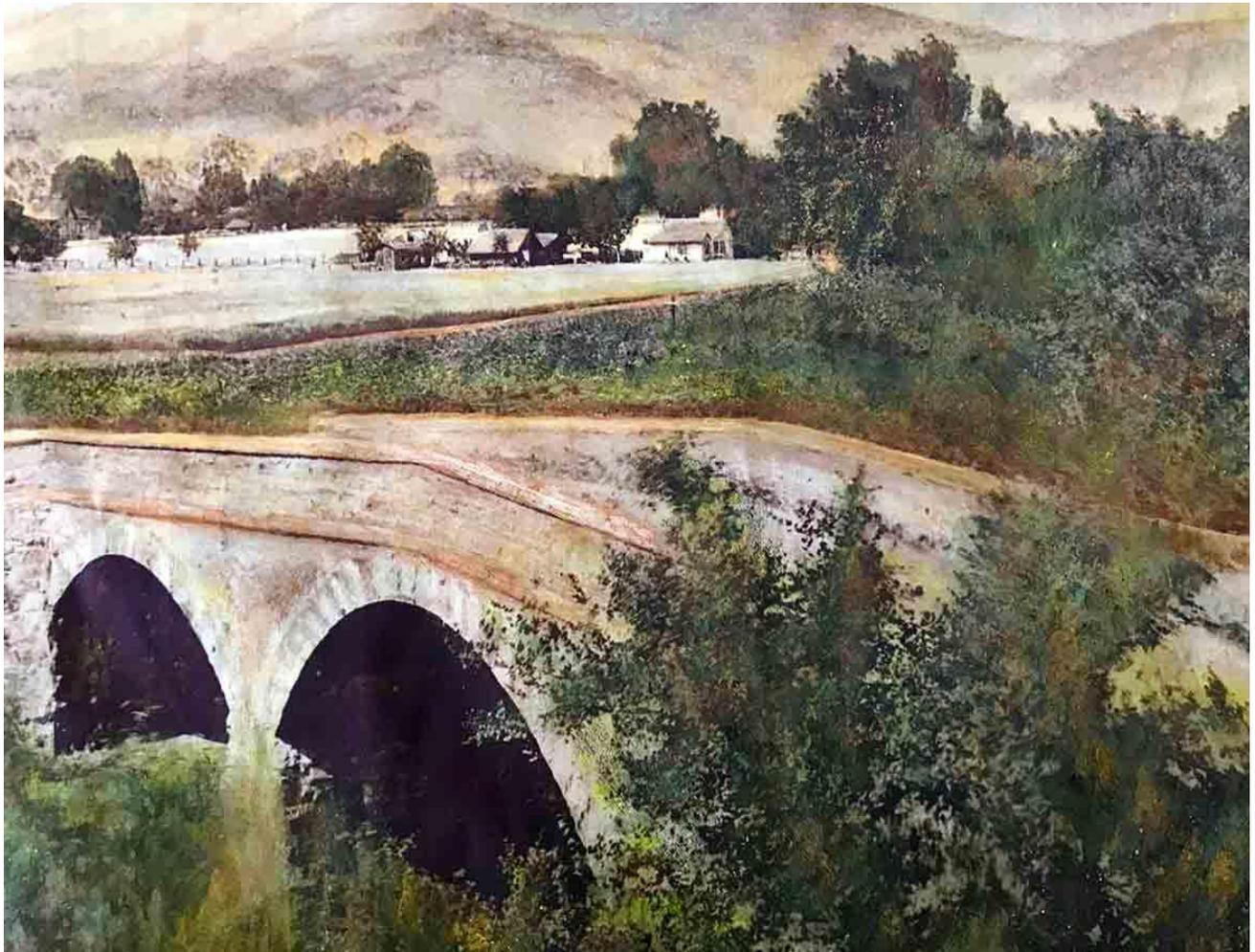


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St. Helena history becomes art at benefit auction

Natasha Biasell Feb 20, 2019

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"Pope Street Bridge" by Carolyn Gamble, is one of the artworks to be auctioned at the St. Helena Historical Society's "Becomes History" event.

Submitted image

Artwork from 18 artists, inspired by photographs from St. Helena's past, will be auctioned during the St. Helena Historical Society's third annual "History Becomes Art" event on Saturday, March 9.

Each artist selected an image from a collection of antique St. Helena photographs to create a work of art. The participating artists, many of whom have deep-rooted connections to the region, all donate their art for the cause. They include Thomas Arvid, Clifford Bailey, Melissa Baker, Mercedes Baker, Leigh Ann Culver, Greg De Lucca, Geoff Ellsworth, Wyn Ericson, Layla Fanucci, Carolynne Gamble, Gordon Huether, Marvin Humphrey, Dinah Cross James, Molly Corbett Kruse, Christine Olivo, Diane Pope, Steven Quartly, and Lin Weber.

"Every artist has a different viewpoint when they see a black and white photograph, and it's incredible to see these old images brought back to life," said Arvid, who had the initial idea to gather artists and auction artwork for the organization.

This year, Arvid is creating his own interpretation of history by painting the famous 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon from Stag's Leap Wine Cellars on old newspaper articles from that era.

Huether, who chose a photograph titled "Old Man McPike," is printing his image on glass and pinning it to recycled wood. Similar to his Celadon Series, Huether aims to blur the lines between painting and sculpture with this historically inspired piece.

“I was drawn to the character of ‘Old Man McPike’ and am reminded how our memory functions to preserve people, places and images of the Napa Valley that are in danger of being forever lost to the march of time and progress,” said Huether, who grew up in St. Helena on Allison Avenue.

Local artist Carolynne Gamble selected a photograph titled “Stone Bridge,” then printed an enlarged, 53-inch version on fabric and painted on it using metallic powders in a 1940s hand-tinted color palette.

“I’ve lived in St. Helena for many years and drive over the Pope Street Bridge almost every day. I found the perspective in this old photograph to be particularly unique because it’s an angle we rarely see of a bridge,” said Gamble. “I deeply value history, legacy, this organization and its members, and when they asked me to participate I was delighted – it’s part of my ethics as an artist to give back to the local community.”

All proceeds from the auctioned artwork will benefit the St. Helena Historical Society’s effort to create a permanent, public gallery space to showcase its diverse collection of cultural objects from the town’s past. Thousands of unique items are a part of the collection including photographs, documents, textiles, gowns, quilts, farm equipment, tools, vehicles, and even a horse-drawn buggy. The collection also features 12,000-year-old Native American artifacts that were recently discovered while digging a levee on Pope Street.

“St. Helena is a unique community, and when I first came in 1959 it was a little country town where everyone knew each other,” said Susanne Salvestrin, president of the St. Helena Historical Society and founder of the “History Becomes Art” event. “A lot of the folks who were instrumental in building this town into what it is today are no longer here, and we do not want these memories to be lost. It is important for our children and grandchildren to understand our roots.”

St. Helena has seen a growing influx of new residents in the past decade, many of whom are eager to learn about the town's history. The St. Helena Historical Society aims to preserve this history for both newcomers and future generations alike, and even has plans of resurrecting an old schoolhouse using original materials. A handful of the organization's members who are retired teachers will replicate the setting, give tours, and show the community what education looked like 100 years ago.

"There's a lot more to us than wine tasting, and we look forward to giving these beautiful and inspiring treasures a proper home," said Salvestrin. "We want to show people where we came from, and where we are going."

"History Becomes Art" takes place from 1 to 4 p.m. in The Gallery at Brasswood Estate. It features auctioneer Devon Bell, hors d'oeuvres, wine and live music.

Tickets are on sale for \$100 and can be purchased online. In addition to the historically inspired artwork included in the auction, participating artists also have an opportunity to submit an additional piece for a 50/50 split of the proceeds. Visit www.shstory.org for tickets, more information, or a sneak peek of some of the art to be auctioned.