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JULY 2009

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ARTIST TO WATCH

the editors' choice for up-and-coming talent



▲ GOLDEN ICON, OIL, 36 X 36.

Elio Camacho

A Passion for the Pacific Coast

When Elio Camacho was three years old, his family moved from Madeira Island, about 540 miles southwest of Lisbon, Portugal, to California's Silicon Valley. As a youngster he developed a keen interest in American comic books and became an incessant doodler. He didn't necessarily think about a career in art then. That would come later. By the time he was in his mid-20s, he had a successful business importing exotic tropical fish from Africa. But his life took a dramatic turn when his company was sold. "That is when I had to decide what I really wanted to do with the rest of my life," Camacho says. ►

ARTIST TO WATCH

In 1997, on somewhat of a whim, he began taking life drawing classes at the Palo Alto Art League. And the rest is history, as they say. He had never picked up a paintbrush before, but soon the budding artist found that painting, especially outdoors, completely captivated his attention and imagination.

Camacho also studied with Ovanes Berberian during this time, and from him he garnered lessons that still guide his creative

process today. "From Ovanes, I learned I had to work really hard, and I had to paint every day," he says. "And I also learned a lot about putting paint on the canvas."

In addition to Berberian, Camacho also turns to impressionists such as Sergei Bongart, Joaquin Sorolla, and Nicolai Fechin for inspiration. For him, these artists embody the way he wants his own work to develop. Like these masters, he wants to go beyond

just copying nature and, instead, express the landscape in his own bold, colorful style. If he had to render every detail in a landscape work, Camacho says, he would have lost interest in painting long ago. Instead, all of his works are done in the *alla prima* fashion, depicting his first impressions of the light as it falls on various subjects.

These days you can most often find Camacho and his easel perched somewhere near the Pacific Coast. His artistic eye surveys the scenes of cliffs, rocks, and crashing waves and translates them into abstracted shapes and saturated colors. The works have a looseness and spontaneity that goes beyond just rendering every detail. Indeed, Camacho says that is his goal—to capture the emotion one feels when the clouds

"I am just trying to show people how I love what I see."



▲ SUNLIT, OIL, 5 X 7.

suddenly open up or the brief moments when the light hits the water perfectly.

When asked what he is trying to convey to the viewer in his works, Camacho replies without hesitation. "Just a passion for being outdoors and the infinite color I see in nature," he says. "I am just trying to show people how I love what I see. When they are up close to my paintings they will seem loose and abstract, and then when they step back it becomes something else." —**BONNIE GANGELHOFF**

DOSSIER

REPRESENTATION

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