

Ronald Williams @ Faulkner Gallery West

Blushing Beauties

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

BY CAPTURING THE ALLURING BEAUTY OF LOCAL WILDFLOWERS,

photographer Ronald Williams hopes to do his part to protect the Los Padres National Forest where he finds his inspiration. Nineteen of Williams' wildflower portraits are on display in the Faulkner Gallery West through the end of December.

"Taking the time to set up the photographs allows me to slow down and appreciate nature," said Williams, who has hiked the Los Padres National Forest for over four decades. "Most of these photographs were taken not more than 10

or 15 air miles from where they are being exhibited. It's wonderful to be that close to natural beauty."

Fascinated by the technical aspects of photography as a teenager growing up in the Midwest, Williams bought himself a used camera and set off to find something news-worthy to photograph. He started by chasing tornados and landed his first publication in a local newspaper.



Ronald Williams

"At that time I was really interested in the technical and journalistic aspects of photography. Although I had wanted to be a professional photographer, I quickly realized that it would be difficult to make a living," he said. "It wasn't until I was much older that I learned there was an artistic side to photography. I traveled to France and Italy and studied 19th century landscape paintings to learn the means to create a composition. When digital photography started, I was bitten again."

After graduating from high school, Williams attended the University of Michigan and worked as a photo editor for the college newspaper and yearbook while earning a degree in Physics. He took a job in Santa Barbara in 1962 and has lived here ever since. After working

as a physicist for a decade, Williams went back to school and earned a Doctorate in Economics from UCSB, where he worked as a researcher until retiring in 2006.

Primarily a self-taught photographer, Williams has taken several workshops to sharpen his skills, including a wildflower photography workshop led by David Gubernick. There he learned to use reflectors and diffusers to redirect sunlight onto the flowers. The flowers are then photographed against a dark background, and the resulting image appears to be painted with light.

"Most of these flowers aren't more than one inch in diameter," said Williams. "People walk right by them because they're so focused on getting to the top of the mountain. But there's so much beauty to overlook. I can spend up to half a day in an area not bigger than a football field, and the longer I spend, the more I see."

Half the proceeds from the show will be donated to ForestWatch, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the wildlife habitat and wilderness landscapes in the Los Padres National Forest.



California Peony by Ronald Williams. The peony is named after Paeon, a student of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing. The California Peony (*Paeonia californica*) is one of two species of Peony native to North America. It is endemic to southwest California. This specimen was found along the Manzana Creek.

In addition to his involvement with ForestWatch, Williams is a member of the Channel City Camera Club and the Santa Barbara Art Association. He has exhibited his photographs at a number of local galleries including Cabrillo Pavilion Art Center, Gallery 113, Meisel Gallery, Samy's Camera, UCSB Faculty Club, and 855 at the Arts Center Gallery. He is a former Channel City Camera Club print finalist and won a Santa Barbara Art Association Honorable mention in 2009.

Faulkner Gallery West is located in the Santa Barbara Public Library at 40 E Anapamu St. Due to library holiday and furlough closures, the gallery will be open 10am-5:30pm Fri, 12/18 and Sat, 12/19; 1-5pm Sun, 12/20; 10am-5:30pm Sat, 12/26; 1-5pm Sun, 12/27; and 10am-8pm Mon, 12/28. For more information, call 448-3589 or visit www.sbplibrary.org.



Fairy Lantern by Ronald Williams. Also known as the Globe Lily (*Calochortus albus*), this flower was found along the Santa Cruz Trail on the way to Little Pine Mountain.