

## Paul Cumes Fine Art Gallery Extemporaneous Expression

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

**A FORTUITOUS SERIES OF EVENTS** led painter Paul Cumes to open a new gallery in downtown Santa Barbara. The space was available, he had hundreds of paintings completed, and he was ready.

“There must be something in the water,” said Cumes, who recently launched Paul Cumes Fine Art Gallery with his wife Cimmerii Mills, also an artist. “Santa Barbara is the perfect place for a creative person to live. We found this place and took a huge leap of faith.”

Cumes grew up in Santa Barbara and



Paul Cumes

graduated from San Marcos High School. He first decided he wanted to be an artist when he discovered Picasso at 15 years old. “I was instantaneously awed by the beauty and minimalism of Picasso’s line work,” said Cumes, who keeps a copy of the Picasso poster that first inspired him close by for good luck. Other discoveries soon followed, including Van Gogh and eventually Gauguin. “I like

the balance and purity of Matisse. I like the fearless courage of Picasso,” he said. “In between that I think I have a naive, almost childlike love for the world around me and a desire to express the joy of living.”

Cumes’ grandmother was also a painter, and he remembers going to her house where he would find her busy painting in the garage. “I was captivated by the process,” he said. “When she passed away, I started painting on canvases she didn’t get around to using. I don’t know if I would have started painting if that hadn’t happened.”

Cumes attended college at Humboldt State and earned a BS in Environmental Science but kept painting throughout. In 2002, Cumes attended The Art Students League in New York and studied oil

painting and figure drawing. “It took a long time to build up the confidence to be a full time artist,” he said. “But I discovered my confidence there, surrounded by ghosts of artists past, like Robert Henri and Jackson Pollock.” When Cumes returned to Santa Barbara, he continued his studies with local teachers including Ray Strong. He took full benefit of the Adult Education Program at SBCC, working in the studio, drawing, painting, and sculpting—sometimes nine hours a day—over a three year period.

This intensive period of study helped Cumes hone the techniques of the *alla prima* style of painting, capturing on canvas what he sees in the moment. “Painting is the coolest way to catch a moment in time, because that moment lasts forever,” he said. “I work rapidly, often leaving my pieces slightly raw and imprecise in order to maximize their expressive energy.”

Located across from the Sunken Gardens, the new gallery will showcase Cumes’ and Mills’ individual artwork but also feature local artists whose art is edgy and different. The inaugural show is a collection of Cumes’



Pear Tree Blossoms by Paul Cumes

landscapes, Mills’ handmade dolls as well as work by Bob Mask.

A meet and greet wine reception with the artists will be held Tuesday, July 21st from 5:30 to 7pm.

Paul Cumes Fine Art Gallery is located at 131 E Anapamu St. Hours are 11-7pm, Sun - Thurs; and 11-9pm, Fri & Sat. For more information, call 845-7644 or visit [www.artsantabarbara.blogspot.com](http://www.artsantabarbara.blogspot.com).



Eucalyptus Hill 2009 by Paul Cumes