

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Images below



Museum of Sonoma County presents *Tilden Daken: The Art of Adventure*

December 9, 2023 – March--, 2024

The Museum of Sonoma County (MSC) is pleased to present *Tilden Daken: The Art of Adventure* from December 9, 2023 through March 3, 2024, in the Museum’s Old Post Office main gallery. The exhibition features over 30 original works by the artist drawn from multiple collections, as well as the remarkable story of Tilden Daken’s life.

Tilden Daken is known as a California Impressionist, the second generation of American artists in the West who painted in Northern and Southern California during the first three decades of the twentieth century. His life, travels, and adventures paralleled many of the important stories of California- From the Gold Fields, to San Francisco, to Hollywood, and across the southern border. His life resonated with the history of the American West and the impulse to seek “rugged adventure.”

Famous in his time, Daken was one of the most adventurous artists of California. After losing his home and studio in the 1906 earthquake and fire, he and his wife moved to Glen Ellen. Daken’s story includes his six years in Sonoma County, his friendship with Jack London and their ride on the rails, his work as a mine mucker in the California Mother Lode, his intrepid winters painting in the High Sierra, his entanglement in the Mexican Revolution, his exhibition at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, painting scenes beneath the sea in a custom-built diving bell, experimental work painting to music in the “key of red,” hobnobbing with film stars and directors in Hollywood, his ill-fated journey to paint the headhunters of New Guinea, penning short stories about his adventures, and much more.

Art critic Harry Noyes Pratt (Berkeley Daily Gazette, October 6, 1927) summed up Daken’s adventurous life:

“Few Men have had such varied experiences as Tilden Daken. Whether he was braving the Mexican war between Villa and Carranza, where he was wounded three times and once held prisoner of war for eight weeks, or dancing around like a crazy man to keep from freezing to death while painting the Piute Pass in midwinter; facing unknown terrors of the ocean depths to secure true submarine views; tempting the headhunters of New Guinea or riding the brake beams with his friend Jack London — always he thought of his art and sought to put true pictures of the world around him on canvas.”

-More-

Mostly self-taught, his en plein air style is rooted in the genres of Realism, Academic Art, Barbizon, Tonalism, and American Impressionism. Unique to any painter of his day, he also captured scenes beneath the Pacific Ocean in a custom-built diving bell, the “Submarine Studio.” He is primarily known for his paintings of the California redwoods, Sierra Nevada Mountains, Sonoma County’s Valley of the Moon, Marin County’s Mount Tamalpais, Southern California’s sunrises and sunsets, California State Parks, and national parks in the West. He also painted in Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, Mexico, Baja, the South Seas, and parts of the East Coast.

His paintings of Sonoma County capture unique scenes of Forestville, the mountainous range near the geysers, the Sonoma Valley, majestic redwoods, the Russian River, vernal pools, marshes, meandering roads, and others.

At least eight museums hold his works, he is referenced in two-dozen books, and Hollywood directors filmed him in his diving bell. In the 1920s, he published autobiographical short stories describing some of his most celebrated adventures: “Experiences in the Rugged West” and “In the Grip of an Octopus.” While many of his paintings were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, it is estimated that he painted more than 4000 works over the course of his painting career.

Tilden Daken’s Granddaughter is Preserving His Legacy

The artist’s life and work has been brought to the fore by his granddaughter, Bonnie Portnoy. Bonnie has written his biography, the first comprehensive and fully-illustrated monograph of Tilden Daken’s life. Set in the cultural and historical context of his time – California at the turn of the 20th century – his story reveals the many intriguing sides of the artist, his unrivaled adventures to capture his scenes on canvas, and the many notable people with whom he mingled—politicians, activists, Hollywood celebrities, naturalists, writers, journalists, and other California Impressionists.

The book, *The Man Beneath the Paint: California Impressionist Tilden Daken*, is scheduled to be released in March of 2024.

Bonnie Portnoy

A native Californian born in Marin County, Bonnie has held senior management positions in merchandising and marketing for four San Francisco Bay Area-based specialty retail companies, and traveled throughout Europe and Asia. As historian for her grandfather, she has established the Tilden Daken Legacy Project, leading her to art historians, museum curators, galleries, auction houses, and the many passionate collectors who have joined in her mission to secure his place in history. Since 2016, Bonnie has spoken often at public and private venues, and welcomes invitations.

To support this and other upcoming exhibitions contact: info@museumsc.org 707.579.1500 ext 104.

Programs and Events

***Tilden Daken: The Art of Adventure* Exhibition Opening**

Saturday, December 9, 2023

11 AM – 5 PM

Pay What you Wish all day at the Museum of Sonoma County

**Tilden Daken: The Man Beneath the Paint
Presentation by Bonnie Portnoy**

Thursday, January 11, 2024
7pm

This event is free for Members and pay what you wish for non-members. Light refreshments and beverages will be served.

Public programs related to the exhibition will be posted on our website:

www.museumsc.org/events

About the Museum of Sonoma County

Located in Downtown Santa Rosa on Seventh Street between A and B Streets, the Museum of Sonoma County (MSC) presents exhibitions of modern and contemporary art and local and regional history. MSC is open year-round with changing exhibitions, public programs, school tours, and special events. MSC preserves and manages a regional art and history collection of over 18,000 objects, the region's largest object documentation of Sonoma County's history and culture.

Mission

The Museum of Sonoma County engages and inspires our diverse community with art and history exhibitions, collections, and public programs that are inclusive, educational, and relevant.

Smithsonian Affiliate

The Museum of Sonoma County has been a Smithsonian Affiliate since 2009. Smithsonian Affiliations establishes long-term partnerships with museums, education and cultural organizations to facilitate the loan of Smithsonian artifacts and traveling exhibitions, as well as to develop innovative educational collaborations locally and nationally. Created in 1996 by an act of the Smithsonian Board of Regents, the program is overseen by the Smithsonian's Assistant Secretary for Education and Access and is one of the pillars of the Institution's national outreach efforts. There are more than 200 Smithsonian Affiliates in nearly every state, Puerto Rico and Panama. Affiliates represent the diversity of America's museum community—size, location and subject—and serve all audiences. More than 8,000 Smithsonian artifacts have been displayed at Affiliate locations for the past 20 years.

Admission

Adults: \$10.00

Seniors, Students, Disabled: \$7.00

EBT Cardholders: FREE

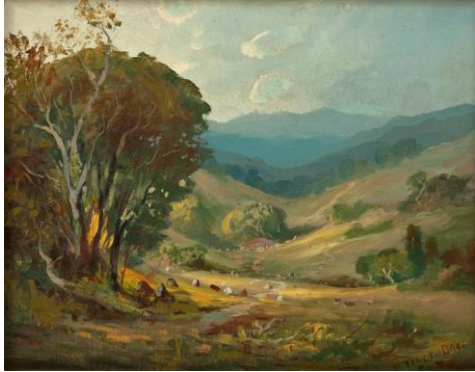
Museum Members: FREE

Children 12 and under: FREE

Museum Hours

Open: Wednesday through Sunday, 11:00am-5:00pm

Images (Contact info@museumsc.org for high-res images)



Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Mountain in the Distance
ca. 1912,
Museum of Sonoma County Collection



Big Sulphur Creek, 1908
36 x 52
Collection of Geoff and Lien Wolfe



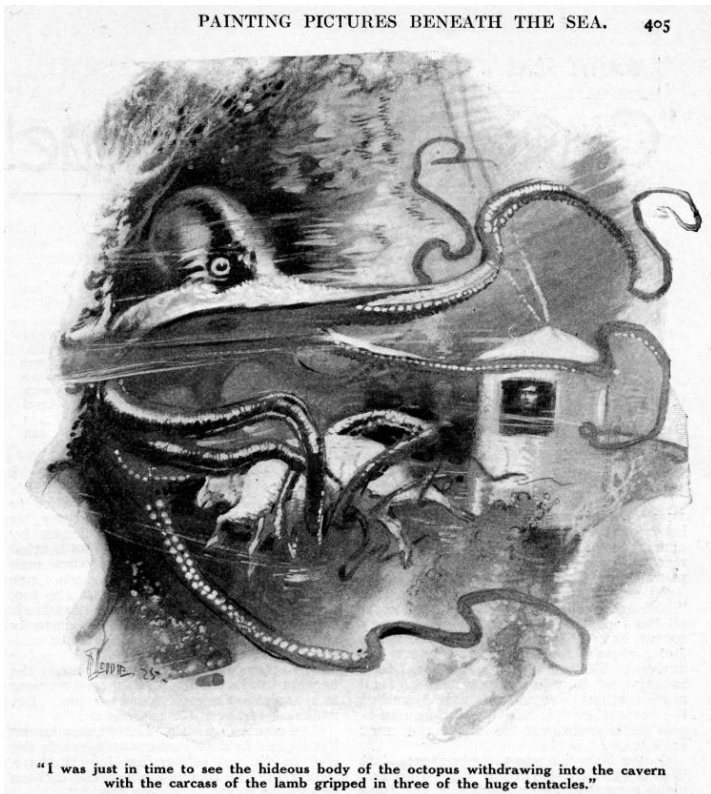
View of the Russian River from Guerneville Heights
Collection of Geoff and Lien Wolfe



Red Sky at Sunset, ca 1924
Gloria Opferman Collection



Tilden Daken painting the coast redwoods at the Russian River, ca. 1909



Tilden Daken in his diving bell, The World Wide Magazine, 1926