

# AMERICAN ARTIST

## Remembering Chouinard

By Kathleen Baxter  
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The house in South Pasadena, California, that Dave Tourjé purchased in 1998 turned out to be much more than the fixer-upper he anticipated. Recognizing the name “Chouinard” on the deed to the property, Tourjé began investigating the original owner. “Being an artist myself, I vaguely remember hearing of Chouinard [Art Institute], but my art school days had begun in 1979, long after Chouinard disappeared,” he says. “I called my aunt, who had gone to art school, and sure enough, she was a student there in the early 1930s.” Tourjé then contacted another former student, Robert Perine, who sent him a copy of his book *Chouinard: An Art Vision Betrayed* (Artra Publishing, Encinitas, California). “When I told him about the house,” Tourjé recalls, “he expressed an interest (echoed by many of his alumni friends) in continuing the Chouinard story by making the house part of Mrs. Chouinard’s legacy.” The two men decided to form the Chouinard Foundation to revive the legacy of the Chouinard School of Art as well as promote the lasting influence of the woman who ran it for over 50 years.



One facet of that promotion is developing exhibitions. This summer the foundation launched a retrospective chronicling the school’s history through the work of its alumni. On view through August 26, “Chouinard: 50 Years of Los Angeles Art” is divided into three sections, each devoted to a generation of the school’s student body, organized by a different curator, and exhibited at a different location: first generation, 1921-1945, at the Oceanside Museum of Art; second generation, 1946-1955, at the Kruglak Gallery; and third generation, 1956-1972, at the Boehm Gallery. All three venues are in northern San Diego county.



Nelbert Chouinard opened the Chouinard Art Institute in 1921. After initial success, the school floundered at the onset of World War II, later to be revived with an influx of students on the GI Bill. By 1949, more than 2,000 veterans were on the waiting list. Early students included Rex Brandt, Hans Hofmann, and Millard Sheets. In 1957, again suffering financial difficulties, the school sought and received help from Walt Disney, who sent some of his early animators to the school. The institute was eventually absorbed into CalArts. ■

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