



E. Charlton Fortune: The Colorful Spirit

August 20, 2017–January 7, 2018



E. Charlton Fortune, *Edinburgh Castle* [detail], c. 1921. Oil on panel, 12 7/8 x 16 1/8 in. Collection of Harry Parashis

Pasadena, CA — California artist E. Charlton Fortune (1885–1969) came of age during a time when women began to challenge the status quo and redefine their expected roles in society. *E. Charlton Fortune: The Colorful Spirit*, an exhibition on view at the Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) August 20, 2017–January 7, 2018, showcases the work of this trailblazing female and one of California’s most significant artists. Fortune had a thriving career as a painter until the age of forty-three when she began a pioneering new vocation as a liturgical artist and as the leader of the Monterey Guild. The exhibition pairs the artist’s Impressionist and Modernist landscapes with her ecclesiastical paintings, furnishings, and other work produced for the Catholic Church.

Educated in Europe and the San Francisco Bay Area as well as the at the Arts Students League in New York, Fortune’s paintings depicted the places she lived and traveled—from the tranquil shores of the Monterey Peninsula to areas surrounding her father’s ancestral home in Scotland, to St. Ives, England, and St. Tropez, France, where she lived for extended periods in the 1920s. Though her paintings are frequently labeled Impressionist, Fortune’s work moved beyond the style, a fact well recognized in her own time. Rather than focusing on nature for its own sake, she emphasized humanity’s impact on the land and was best known for colorful landscapes featuring architecture and elements of modern life. Often including active female figures, Fortune’s paintings were socially engaged. They were also strong in color—frequently rendered in primary or complementary hues—and rugged and gestural in execution, leading some reviewers and critics to assume she was a man. Many described her paintings as “masculine,” attributing their success to a perceived virility—then one of the most highly regarded qualities in art. Starting in 1928, Fortune’s disenchantment with mass-produced ecclesiastical art led her to create designs of her

own. She then founded the Monterey Guild, comprised of a group of skilled craftspeople, who, under her direction, created original, modern artworks and furnishings for churches. Her religious objects returned the focus to the liturgy and brought a sense of taste back to into the Church.

Throughout her life, Fortune remained unmarried and independent, and her art demonstrates not only her bold artistic freedom and mastery of many media, but also the tenacity of a strong and dynamic woman. “In the early to mid-twentieth century, E. Charlton Fortune was one of the most important California artists, male or female,” says curator of the exhibition Scott A. Shields, Ph.D. “The fact that she was a woman working at a transitional moment and in an atmosphere that still discouraged female professionals makes her achievements all the more extraordinary. No one disputes her standing as one of California’s most prestigious artists.” Through approximately 80 works, *E. Charlton Fortune: The Colorful Spirit* illuminates this formidable artist’s contributions to early California painting and American liturgical design as well as the indomitable spirit of a progressive woman.

E. Charlton Fortune: The Colorful Spirit is organized by the Pasadena Museum of California Art and curated by Scott A. Shields, Ph.D., California art scholar and Crocker Art Museum’s Associate Director and Chief Curator. A 240-page, fully illustrated catalogue featuring scholarly essays by Shields and by Julianne Burton-Carvajal, Ph.D., accompanies the exhibition. Following its debut at the PMCA, the exhibition will travel to the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento from January 28–April 22, 2018, and the Monterey Museum of Art from May 24–August 27, 2018.

The exhibition is supported by the PMCA Board of Directors, PMCA Ambassador Circle, and the California Visionary Fund. California art patrons Yvonne Boseker, Simon Chiu, Kelvin Davis, Marie and Murray Demo, John and Patricia Dilks, Jeff Dutra, William C. Georges, Stephen MacFarlane, and Thomas B. Stiles II and Barbara Alexander underwrite the exhibition. Generous grants from the Historical Collections Council of California Art and the Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation along with corporate sponsorship from Bonhams Auctioneers, Heritage Auctions, John Moran Auctioneers, Josh Hardy Galleries, and Paula and Terry Trotter, Trotter Galleries provide invaluable support.



Left to Right: E. Charlton Fortune, *Santa Barbara, California*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 38 1/4 x 50 3/8 in. Monterey Museum of Art. Robert J. Dwyer Trust, 2010.014;
E. Charlton Fortune, *Gethsemane (Could'st Thou Not Watch One Hour with Me?)*, 1942. Oil on canvas on board, 65 1/2 x 46 in. Carmel Mission Museum



Related Programs

Unless otherwise noted all programs are free with admission and no reservations are required.

PMCA 1234 MONTHLY PROGRAMMING

Free First Fridays • 12:00–5:00pm

Enjoy free admission all day!

September 1 • October 6 • November 3 • December 1 • January 5

Second Saturday Spotlight Talks • 2:00pm

A PMCA docent leads an engaging and insightful 20-minute discussion about a work of art currently on view in the Museum.

September 9 • October 14 • November 11 • December 9

Free Third Thursday Evenings (& Then Some) • 5:00–8:00pm

Enjoy free admission, extended hours, and free programs!

September 21 • October 19 • November 16 • December 21

Free Fourth Wednesdays Wee-Reads • 10:30-11:30am

After a kid-friendly exhibition tour, return to the Project Room where Miss Leah reads children's literature that connects art and learning. Then get creative during PMCA-led activities that integrate the themes of specially selected stories, basic elements of art, and the artwork in the PMCA galleries.

Recommended for children ages 2-5. Caregivers must accompany children.

August 23 • September 27 • October 25 • November 22

Educational programs are made possible by a generous gift from Peggy Phelps and a grant from the Sidney Stern Memorial Trust.

Museum Information

MISSION

The mission of the Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is to present the breadth of California art and design through exhibitions that explore the cultural dynamics and influences that are unique to California.

HOURS

Open Wednesday–Sunday, 12:00–5:00pm; third Thursday of each month, 12:00–8:00pm; closed Monday, Tuesday, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

ADMISSION

\$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors (62+); \$5 for students & educators; free for PMCA members and children (12 and under); free the first Friday of each month (12:00–5:00pm); free the third Thursday of each month (5:00–8:00pm). Access for people with disabilities is provided.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

The museum is located at 490 East Union Street. From the 210 Freeway, take the Lake Avenue exit. Go south and take a right on Union Street. From the 110 Freeway/Downtown Los Angeles, follow the freeway until its end, then take Arroyo Parkway and turn right at Colorado, then left at Oakland to get to Union Street. Parking is available at the Museum.

DOCENT TOURS AND GROUP RATES

The museum offers docent tours on the second Saturday of each month (2:00pm; free with admission). Docent tours are also available Wednesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00pm, to private groups for a fee of \$75. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is due two weeks prior to the scheduled date. Self-guided tours for K-12 students are offered for free. We regret that we are unable to accommodate docent tours for groups larger than 35 people. Before requesting a tour, please check the exhibition calendar to see which exhibitions will be available during your visit.

A discounted group rate of \$3 per person is available for groups of 20 or more (K-12 student groups are free). Please call to notify us at least one week in advance for these special admission rates. For any questions or to make reservations for a tour or group rate, call our Membership, Visitor Services & Bookstore Associate, Aya Lehman, at 626.568.3665 x14 or email alehman@pmcaonline.org.

For more information, please call 626.568.3665 or visit pmcaonline.org.