



San Francisco Open Studios at 1890 Bryant St.

San Francisco Open Studios at 1890 Bryant St. : Get some face time with artists and their works

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For art admirers, it's enriching seeing a work close enough to distinguish all of its subtle details. More meaningful is observing the space where it was made and speaking with the person who created it.

That's the beauty of ArtSpan's San Francisco Open Studios, an annual four-weekend event beginning Saturday, when close to 800 emerging and established artists, in neighborhoods throughout the city, invite the public into their studios.

At the 1890 Bryant St. studios, approximately 50 painters, photographers, ceramicists and others will exhibit their work.

These include surrealist painter Cynthia Tom, whose work features images of strong Chinese women set in ethereal, vividly saturated surroundings.

In "Aspiration of the Self Assured," Tom floats among calla lilies, and in "Flotation Device," a woman has her mouth submerged in water and her head topped with a rooted tree. They are among the paintings Tom will display.

"The women and the feminism came through after I was exploring my family history and learning about my grandmother's life," Tom says. "She came through Angel Island, she was a Chinese American and she had a really rough life."

Tom learned that her grandmother's village sold her, her grandfather bought her and she most likely journeyed to America in the ship's cargo hold, probably because her husband didn't buy her a passenger ticket, which infuriated Tom.

"That started the whole women thing," says Tom, who hopes to empower women through her art. "Not focusing on the pain, but looking at what you can do, what you can be."

Growing up in London with an artist mother, portrait painter Jeremy Sutton anticipated becoming an artist. His subjects have included Virgin founder Sir Richard Branson, whose portrait he did in five minutes during Virgin Atlantic Airway's inaugural flight to San Francisco.

He creates his vibrant, Impressionist-style works with a two-step process that mixes technology with conventional painting methods.

"Part of my process is digital painting using a stylus with Corel Painter, which does real brush marks. So it's not Photoshop, it's not just press a button," Sutton says. "It's as much physical painting as dipping into an oil paint and brushing it on to the canvas."

Afterward, he prints the piece on canvas and completes it using traditional painting techniques.

Sutton will do a digital portrait demonstration at the preview reception at 7:30 p.m. Friday and he'll show work including "Moment in Time," featuring tango dancers, and "The Speech," a portrait of President Obama's nomination acceptance speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

Reception 6-9 p.m. Fri., open studios: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat.-Sun. 1890 Bryant St., S.F.
www.1890.bryant.com, www.sfoopenstudios.com.

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