

AMERICAN ARTIST

WWW.ARTISTDAILY.COM

JULY/AUGUST 2011

STOP AND PAINT THE FLOWERS

7 COLORFUL STEPS SHOW YOU HOW TO GET STARTED

SUMMER DREAMS

Capture Your Getaway
Using Acrylics, Photos, &
On-Site Sketches

WHAT'S ON YOUR PALETTE?

5 Artists' Top Picks

WET CANVASES

Learn to Paint
Waves That You
Can Dive Into

AN ENDURING LEGACY

PAGE
60

How a Leading Member of
the Famed New York School
Makes a Painting

Bikini (detail)
by David Lyle

\$5.99 U.S./\$6.99 Canada



0 74851 08349 9

07

Getting Away:

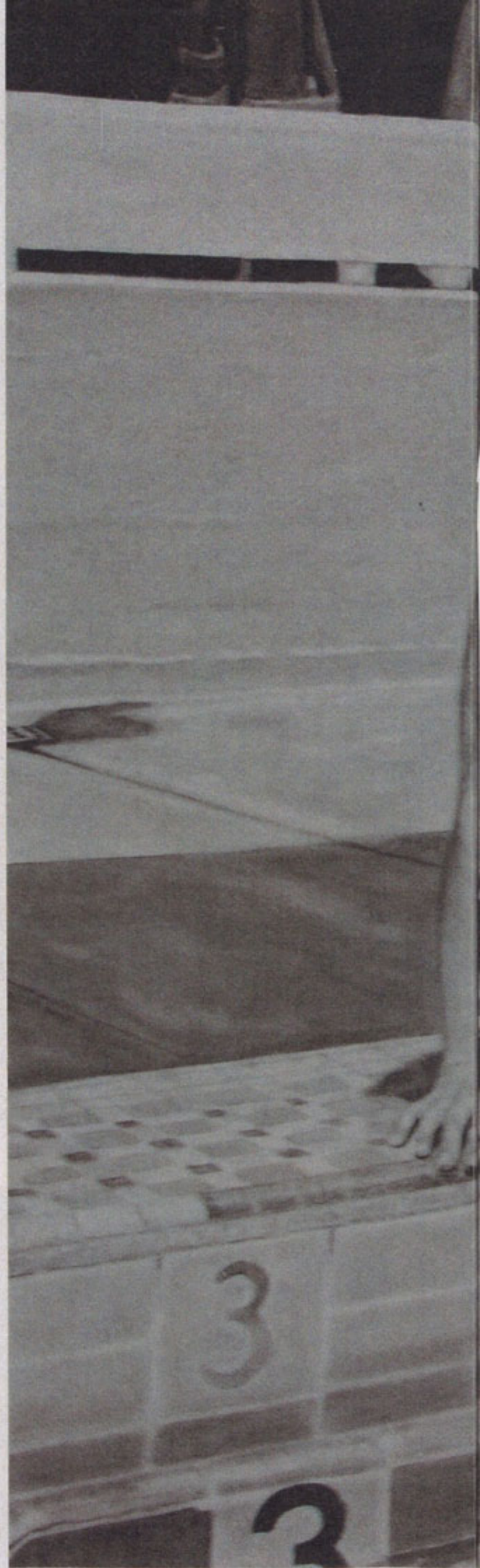
TRAILER PARKS, ROAD TRIPS, AND OTHER SUMMER ESCAPES

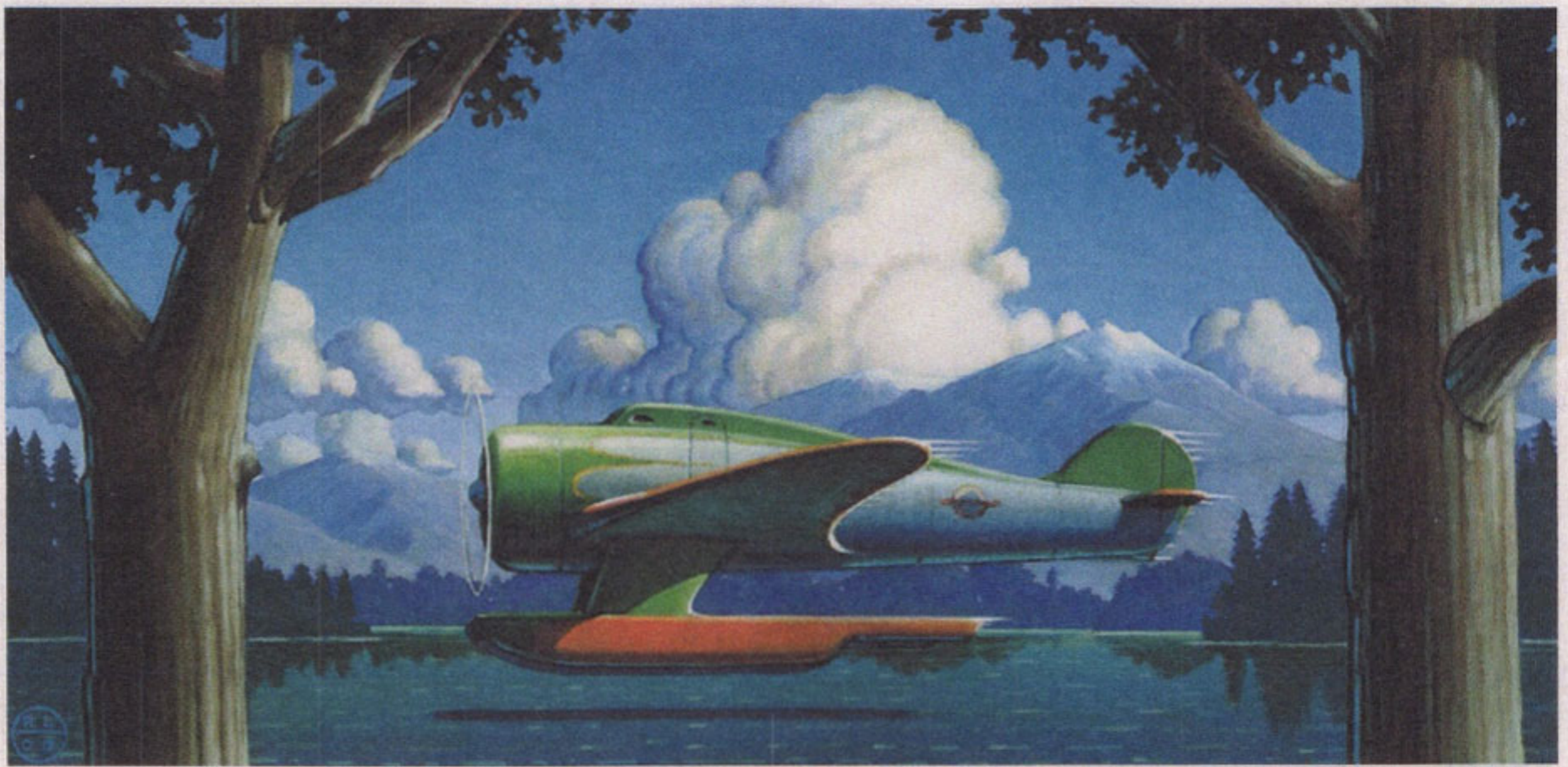
ARTISTS **ROBERT LADUKE, SCOTT YESKEL, AND DAVID LYLE** TAKE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CREATING PLAYFUL YET MYSTERIOUS IMAGES THAT CAPTURE THE NOSTALGIA OF AMERICAN PASTIMES.

by **Naomi Ekperigin**

M

aybe it's something about Southern California that inspires artists to loosen up a bit. Or maybe it's the seemingly endless summer weather that makes the great outdoors an ever-present escape and steady source of inspiration all year round. Or maybe there's just something in the water. No matter how you explain it, the work of California natives Robert LaDuke, Scott Yeskel, and David Lyle show the ways in which contemporary realism is evolving in response to a culture that loves kitsch, and a generation of artists and collectors who no longer see a floral still life as the height of artistic prowess. As we enjoy the warmth and relaxation summer brings, it's interesting to note the ways in which contemporary realism is also "getting away from it all."





ABOUT THE ARTIST

California native **Robert LaDuke** earned a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he first studied as a high school student. He is represented by Meyer Munson Gallery and Meyer East Gallery, both in Santa Fe; Leslie Levy Fine Art, in Scottsdale, Arizona; and Sue Greenwood Fine Art, in Laguna Beach, California. For information on upcoming shows, visit www.meyereastgallery.com and www.suegreenwoodfineart.com.

Scott Yeskel

"Over the last five years or so, I've rediscovered Los Angeles," Scott Yeskel says of the inspiration for his paintings of vintage airstreams, taco trucks, and the sun-baked California landscape. "My work has been about the grittiness of L.A. and the pure wanderlust it inspires. There's the heat and congestion, but there's also this divine landscape that keeps calling me to go out and explore." Many publications describe Yeskel as an "East Coast transplant" to California because he was born in New Jersey. Since his parents relocated to Southern California when Yeskel was

five years old, he's only ventured as far away as San Francisco, making him as Californian as anyone.

He moved to San Francisco to attend Academy of Art College (now Academy of Art University), which provided an excellent training ground for his current work. "I was classically trained at the Academy, and I studied plein air painting all four years," he says. "That really helped me learn to interpret images, both on-site and from photographs. I don't like to call my work photorealism—I call it painterly realism. My goal isn't to reproduce what I see; I want to make it symbolic and beautiful." For Yeskel, this symbolism comes from creating a mood and not slavishly including every detail he sees. In paintings such as *Their Final Trip*, his use of transparent glazes encapsulates the languid haze of a July afternoon. The airstream on the curb, all ready to go, isn't a product of the artist's imagination—it's a common sight in the California desert. "My wife and I go on these treasure hunts and find all sorts of things," the artist says. "We always see these old, vintage airstreams that are a bit smaller, more compact. I really like painting them."

Yeskel also creates large-scale

making big changes," LaDuke says, "so I try to be sure of what I'm doing from the beginning." Although his composition is clear from the start and he works to make sure that his values are accurate, "I don't have a story I'm trying to tell," the artist insists. "I start working from an image in my mind, and I let the painting inform me."

Despite the nostalgia that his paintings evoke, he admits that they sometimes have a darker undertone that belies their playful compositions and colors. In *Hollywoodland*, an elephant perches precariously on the bed of a pickup truck as a gymnast keeps his balance on the animal's back. "I like things that scare me, that are sort of uncomfortable," LaDuke explains. "Circuses have always frightened me. I like animals and think it's odd that they are forced to be on stage. And I was also at a point in my life when things were in flux and unsteady—I could relate to the elephant," he says with a laugh.

It's this sense of humor that makes the artist's work so captivating and has earned him several long-term collectors. Although he has spent years painting fantastical scenes, his approach to making art is anything but glib. "I'm not always serious," he says, "but I'm always sincere."



ABOVE

Their Final Trip

by Scott Yeskel, 2011,
oil on wood, 24 x 24.

RIGHT

A Reason to Leave

by Scott Yeskel, 2010,
oil on wood, 24 x 24.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Hideaway

by Robert LaDuke,
2010, acrylic on panel,
10½ x 22.



Yeskel's Palette

The artist began using this palette as an undergraduate at Academy of Art College, in San Francisco, and has stuck with it ever since. He uses Winsor & Newton student-grade paints in the following colors:

- cadmium yellow
- yellow ochre
- cadmium orange
- cadmium red light
- terra rosa
- alizarin crimson
- cerulean blue
- ultramarine blue
- burnt umber
- titanium white



abstract paintings that “evoke the raw emotion that I get from the landscape,” he says. He recently began teaching his approach to landscapes—both realist and abstract—at the Kline Academy of Fine Art, a new atelier in Los Angeles. “It’s not like a still life class where you just sit and paint,” he says. “We have a lot of discussions about art theory, local artists who are doing similar work, and contemporary art in general.” Yeskel has only two rules for students, whether they work abstractly or representationally: Adhere to the foundational tenets of painting and drawing, and use the same California Impressionist palette that the instructor employs. He uses Winsor & Newton student-grade paint and hardware-store brushes. “I’m not a stickler for expensive materials,” the artist says. “I think if artists want to

spend money, they should spend it on classes, not a tube of paint.”

This sentiment best exemplifies the artist’s goals. For Yeskel, it’s the experience that’s most worthwhile; only by doing can one expect to grow as an artist. “The most beautiful, talented, and passionate people come here to work their tails off,” he says. “I find L.A. to be immensely inspiring. It’s been a great city to get things going. Once you get a little momentum, the sky’s the limit.” Only by taking long drives, venturing off the beaten path, and making the most of gridlocked traffic can he find reasons to keep painting. Just as actors, writers, and filmmakers flock to Los Angeles with big dreams, Scott Yeskel takes to the open road as often as possible, seeking to make reality more dreamlike.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Scott Yeskel earned his B.F.A. in painting from the Academy of Art College, in San Francisco. Since returning to Southern California seven years ago, he has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and taught artists of all levels. He is currently an instructor at the Kline Academy of Fine Art, in Los Angeles. This summer, his work will be on view at Jack Fischer Gallery, in San Francisco, from July 7 through August 20. For more information about the artist, visit www.scottyeskel.com.