

# IN PERSPECTIVE

Art-world news and market updates, exhibitions and events.

## Voluntary Simplicity

THE CELEBRATED landscape painter Gregory Kondos turns 98 on April 3. In celebration, Caldwell Snyder Gallery is presenting an exhibition of rare artworks by Kondos this month at its San Francisco gallery location. The show includes a selection of oil on canvas, charcoal drawings, and works on paper.

Kondos was born to Greek immigrants in Massachusetts, but after a move to Sacramento in 1927, California became his most enduring muse. Just like much of his subject matter, Kondos' unique style is also inspired in large part by the Golden State. His palette and composition are reminiscent of Bay Area contemporaries like Richard Diebenkorn, and his thick, almost creamy paint application rhymes with that of his close friend Wayne Thiebaud. But Kondos was also influenced by the Abstract Expressionists, especially Willem

de Kooning, which is evident in his energetic gestural strokes. He has looked also to Gauguin's exploration of color and Cézanne's reduction

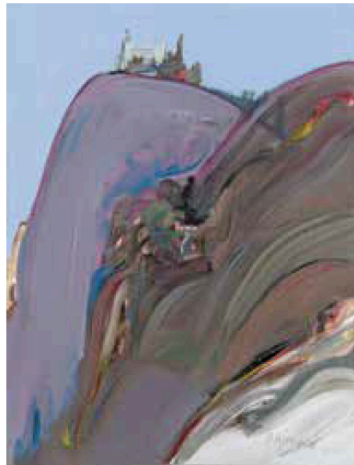


tion of nature to its simplest shapes.

Second only to California as an influence and a subject for painting is Kondos' ancestral homeland of Greece. A visit there in 1963 had a transformative effect on his work. "It was in Greece that he learned his palette of blues and whites and there that he discovered the solid forms and simple geometries of boldly shadowed buildings bathed in coastal luminos-

ity," wrote Scott A. Shields, chief

curator of the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, in the catalogue for a 2013 exhibition of Kondos' work at the museum. Kondos would eventually make 47 trips to Greece. The artist's sense of place and atmosphere is all his own, however. He adheres to the principle of restraint. "Less is more," he has said, "and what is left out makes the picture more understandable." In *Greek Monastery* (oil), a highlight of the show, purple sloping hills are carved into the sky in broad strokes. In the distance, atop one of these hills, as if floating precariously in the ether, sits the titu-



lar monastery. In *Mt Pedernal* (oil), the New Mexican landmark is rendered as a mound of brilliant, striated color. The sky above is baby blue and punctuated with small, thickly rendered white clouds that look like floating disks. The luscious *Lily Fields* (oil) is a landscape that behaves almost as a still life. A highly energetic rendering of budding lilies and

leaves, the work shows Kondos at his most exuberant and abstract. Kondos, who holds degrees from California State University, Sacramento, Sacramento State College, and the University of California, Davis, has taught at Sacramento State College and Sacramento City College and was Artist in Residence at Yosemite for five years. His work is in the permanent collections of museums including SFMOMA, the Crocker Art Museum, and the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.



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