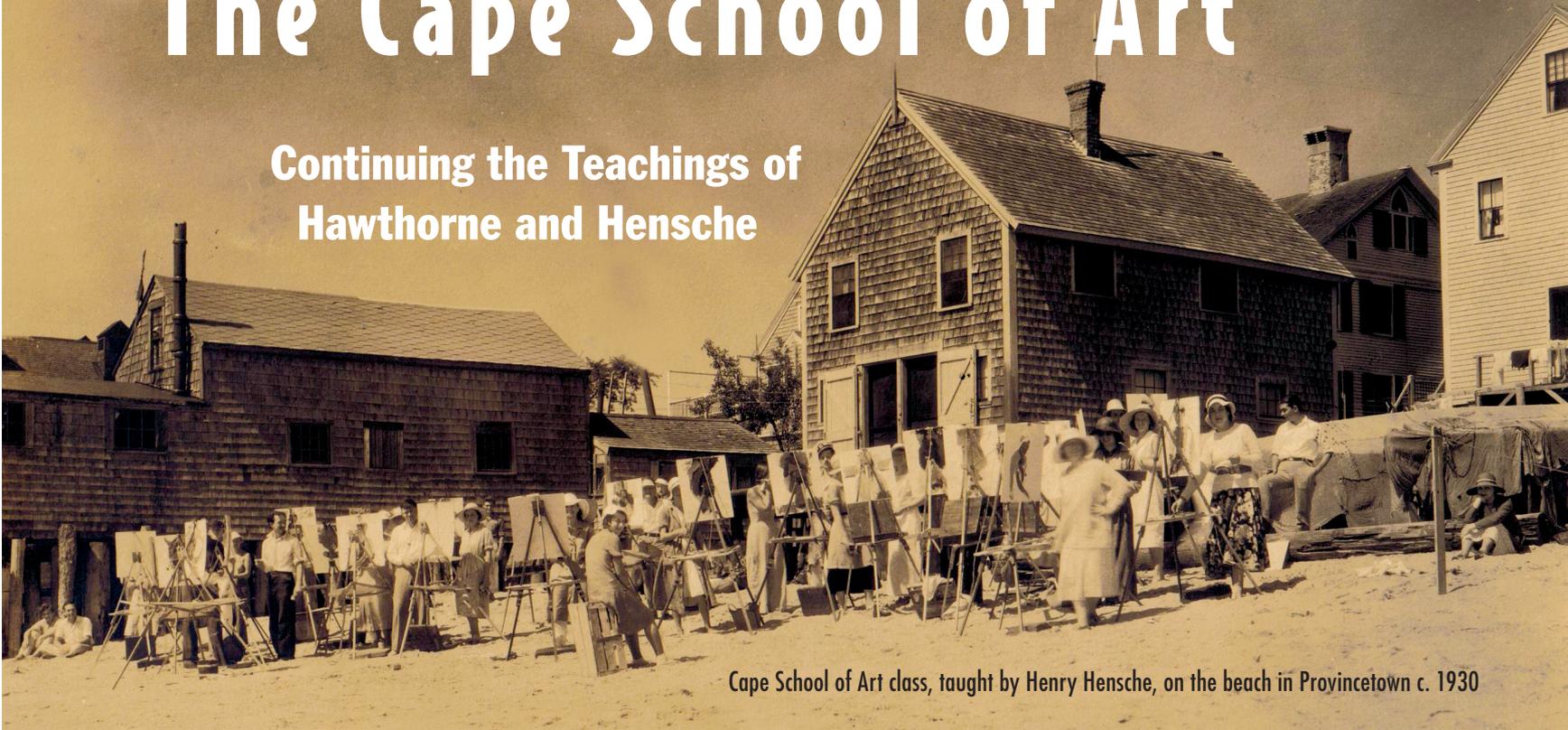


The Cape School of Art

Continuing the Teachings of Hawthorne and Hensche



Cape School of Art class, taught by Henry Hensche, on the beach in Provincetown c. 1930

A GROUP OF LOCAL PAINTERS, art enthusiasts and former students of Henry Hensche has reorganized the historic Cape School of Art as a non-profit. Founded in 1899 by Charles Hawthorne, the painting school is the longest-running art school in Provincetown and helped cement the town's reputation as the oldest art colony in the United States. It was operated by Henry Hensche for over 50 years, who took over the school from Charles Hawthorne in 1930.

Painters Hilda Neily and Robert Longley, both students of Hensche's, along with a group of like-minded artists and supporters, are offering classes in the Hensche method of plein air painting this summer. That technique, first developed by Hawthorne, was handed down to his prize student Henry Hensche. Hensche continued to run the art school until his death in 1992 and "developed a series of exercises which enabled serious students to learn to see color in its purest forms," according to the new school's literature. That technique is in danger of dying out, according to Neily and Longley, and they are dedicated to preserving not only the painting technique but also the historic role both Hawthorne and Hensche played in Provincetown.

Said Neily, "What Henry taught us was how to see color. We're painting the illusion of light. You have to be taught to see, how to compare this color to the next one to the next one. It's a process where your eye begins to develop and discern subtle changes in light."

The Hawthorne technique of painting outdoors to better understand how light transforms color was revolutionary at the time. When Hensche took over the school, he moved it from a barn at the top of Miller Hill Road to another old barn at 46 Pearl Street where for the next 50-plus years hundreds of students came to learn from the master. His lessons were embraced by many, including Longley and Neily, who remained in Provincetown perfecting their plein air style and, in turn, teaching their own students.

"Truly a wonderful cadre of artists came out of that school," said Chris

McCarthy, Executive Director of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. "They've kept the tradition going of plein air painting. That is a key to why we're such a well-known art colony."

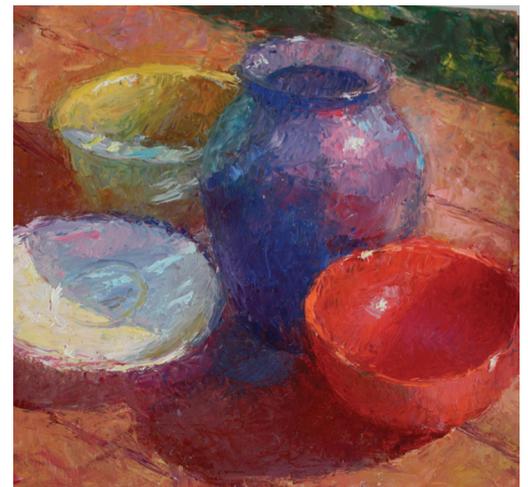
But worried that there won't be anyone else to carry on these teachings, a group of Hensche devotees, including John Ebersberger, Arthur Egeli, and Cedric and Joannette Egeli, began meeting last summer to discuss how to revive the school, which was taken over in 1987 by former Hensche student Lois Griffel. After operating the school for many years, Griffel eventually sold the Pearl Street barn in 2003 when soaring housing costs caused a severe drop in enrollment. The barn has since been turned into condominiums.

Neily said she and Longley had long talked about continuing the school, but finally this past spring they were able to create a board of directors along with committees to handle development, recruit artists, and find financing.

Ideally, the group wants to raise \$500,000 to purchase a building that can be turned into a similar painting studio as the one that Hensche had. But they're willing to aim lower initially, raising enough money to cover the costs of launching a series of outdoor classes this summer.

"The roots of the school are deep in the town, it's part of that

Hilda Neily, "Deep Red Bowl"





Rob Longley, "Autumn Afternoon, Beach Forest"

heritage. That's why we wanted to keep it here, it belongs here," Neily said.

The Cape School of Art has registered for non-profit status, which will allow it to begin seeking grants and other funding. The group envisions a year-round art studio offering traditional painting classes to adults and children alike, as well as scholarships to promising students who may not be able to afford to come to Provincetown to study, with its high cost of living. And the artist/teachers involved also want to create an environment where they can work together on their craft.

"As valuable as Henry was as a teacher, it was equally valuable that we worked together and had this shared vision. We want this to be a place where people can learn from each other," said Longley.

"When students continue teaching this method, it goes right back to Hawthorne, acknowledged as the founding father of the Provincetown art colony," said McCarthy. "It takes you right back to the beginning." ▲

• Classes from June through September. Instructors include Hilda Neily, John Clayton, Cedric Egeli, Rob Longley, John Ebersberger, Mary Giammarino, Margaret McWethy, Nancy Graham, and Camille Przewodek. (508) 246-6059

www.capeschoolofart.org

Hilda Neily, "Dunes," oil on board



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