

Monterey Museum of Art highlights the work of regional artists in a summer-long show.

Agata Popęda
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Monterey artist Warren Chang is one of 122 area artists featured in a new museum show. His “Salinas River at Dusk” is a realistic depiction of farmworkers preparing tamales.

DANIEL DRIEFUSS

Instead of following its usual season formula, Monterey Museum of Art is filling the summer with one huge exhibition. Celebrating California art, *Monterey Biennial* is now open for viewing and will remain on display until September.

More than 800 works of art were submitted. Curators accepted 122 contemporary artists living in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo counties. Over 50 of them were created by artists from Monterey County.

One of this contingent is Warren Chang from Monterey, who can be described as a contemporary Old Master, bringing to mind European paintings created up to the 18th century.

Chang's favorite subjects are field workers from the Salinas Valley and further south to the county line. He submitted to the *Monterey Biennial* exhibit his 2025 work titled "Salinas River at Dusk." Chang sees his work as a visual continuation of what writer John Steinbeck was committed to – documenting the struggle of the perpetual underdog.

The painting is a larger version of a study Chang painted in 2024 and still hangs at the Winfield Gallery in Carmel; with each piece, Chang creates a small study before creating a large work.

"People who worked on the farms tell me stories and this was a scene that they described," Chang says. "They said that before starting work, the laborers set a little fire by the field and eat tamales."

Chang was inspired by a 19th-century French naturalist, Jean François Millet, who also painted field workers.

"We wanted to showcase the art of the Central Coast region – Monterey County and six counties around," says Laurie Iwami, the museum's communication and marketing director. "The region doesn't get as much attention as the San Francisco or Los Angeles art communities. We wanted to shine the light on our artists."

All submissions were evaluated by a panel of judges, who were first and foremost looking for quality. The theme of the exhibit is "Resonance and Reflection," a prompt that the artists were free to interpret their way. However, they had to explain the connection between their work and the theme in a personal statement.

In addition to the *Monterey Biennial* exhibit, the museum will be showing its recent acquisitions this summer.

BIENNIAL OPENING CELEBRATION 11am-4pm Saturday, May 17. Monterey Museum of Art, 559 Pacific St., Monterey. 372-5477, montereyart.org.

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