

PREVIEW

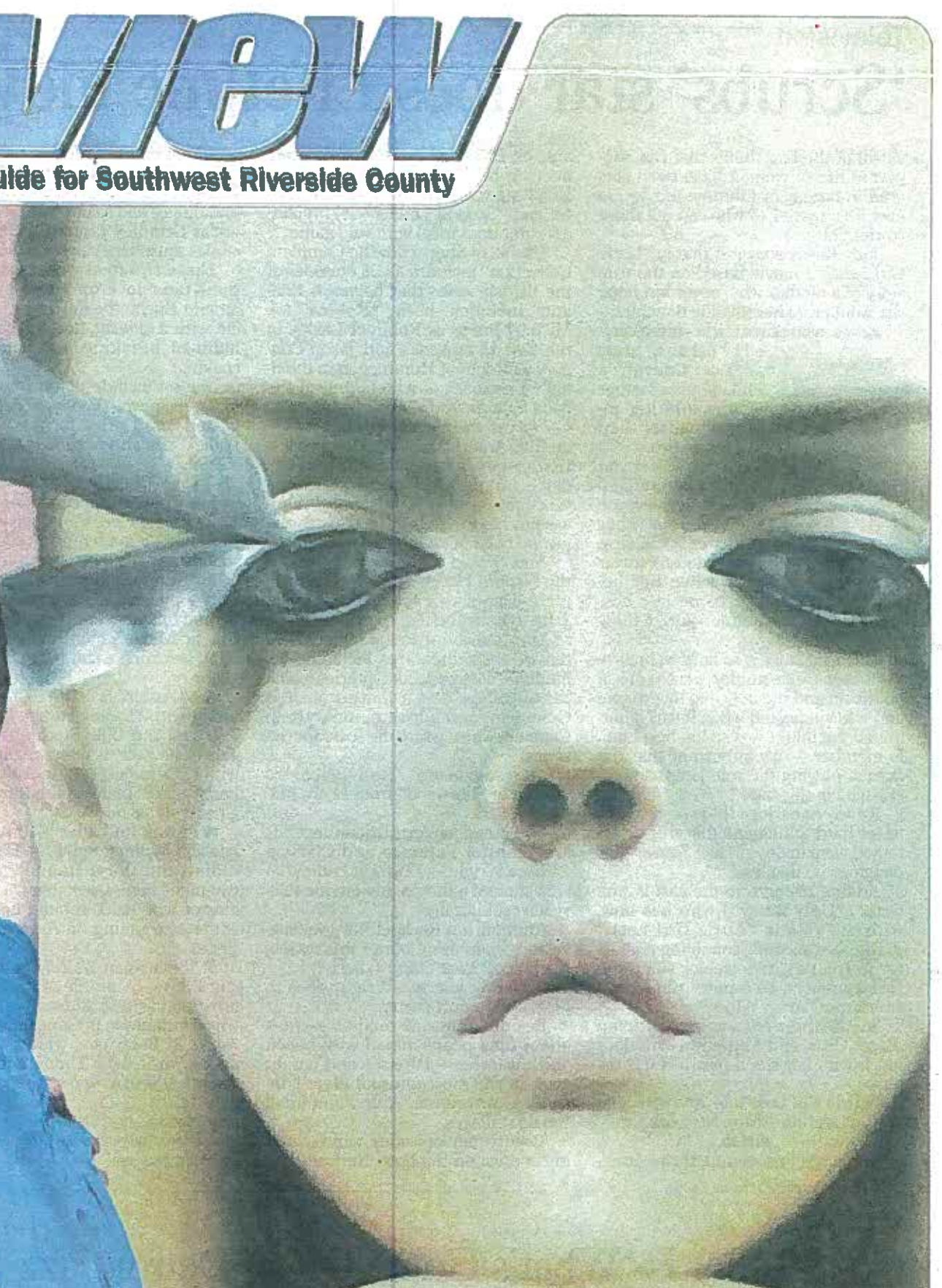
entertainment guide for Southwest Riverside County

Southwest Riverside County



ROMEO AND JULIET BEGINS RUN AT WINERY

see main event



PAUL J. PRICE EXHIBIT OPENING

see main event

For the week of August 14 - 20, 2008

THE CALIFORNIAN

Price questions true beauty through his art

HOLLY HERNDON
FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

What is true beauty? Does ugliness even exist?

Artist Paul J. Price will pose these questions and others to viewers of his upcoming art exhibition; debuting Friday in Old Town Temecula, presented by the Arts Council of Temecula Valley.

Price remembers how art was always a part of his life.

"I don't think I ever made a conscious decision to be an artist," he said. "When I was a boy, art was always something I seemed to be doing. I wasn't as physically strong as my older brothers who were involved in sports. I would stay on the sidelines and collect leaves or butterflies or rocks or insects."

Paul J. Price Exhibit

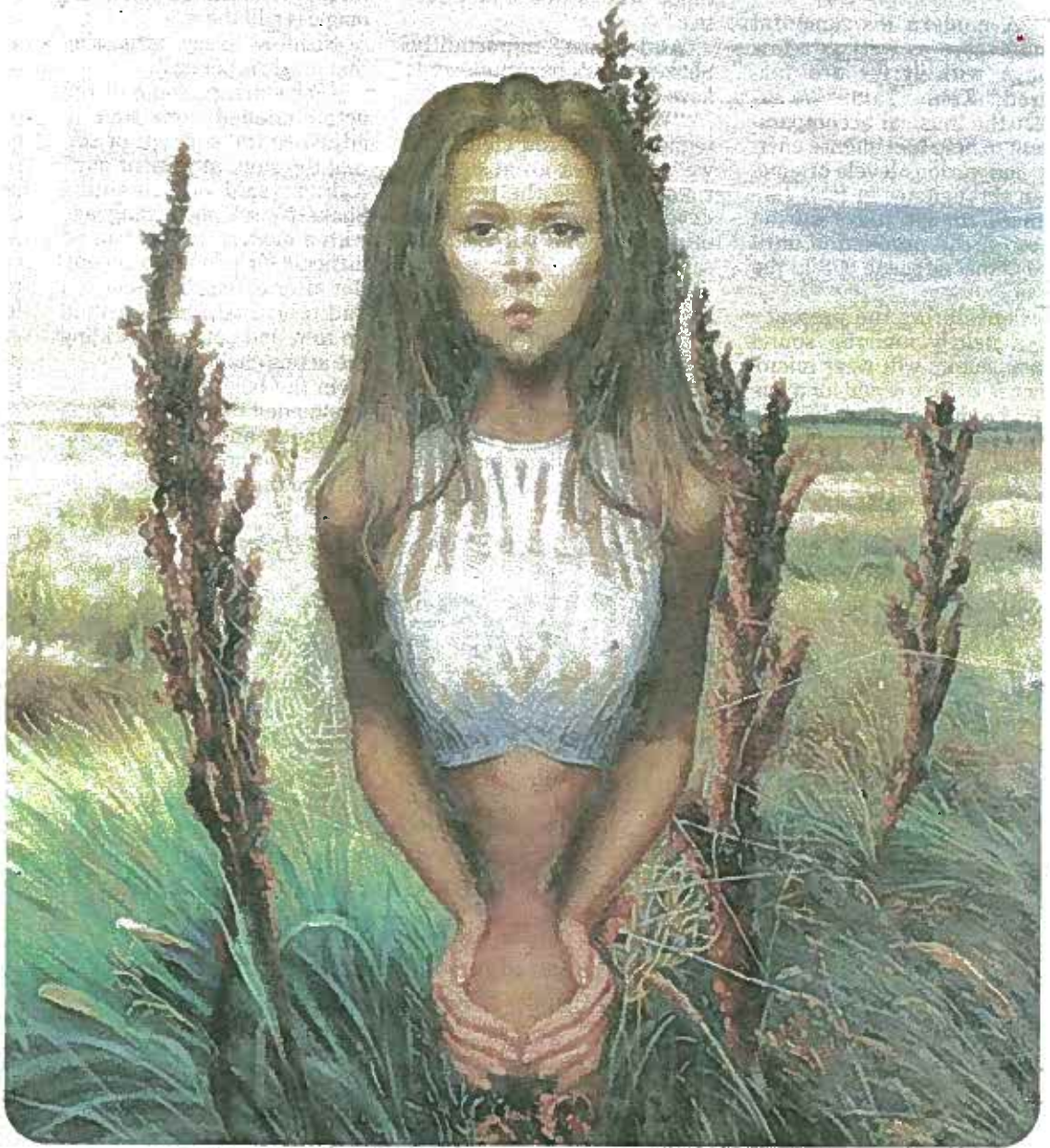
When: opening reception, 5:30 p.m. Friday; exhibition continues through Oct. 5; gallery hours, 2-6 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays
Where: Gallery at The Merc, Old Town Temecula Community Theater complex, 42051 Main St., Temecula
Admission: free
Info: (951) 695-2787

"In school, I can even remember getting special awards or doing special projects for grade school teachers. I was always an artist."

After college, Price pursued animation but discovered that most art students had the same ambition after graduation and a job was hard to come by. Price soon found a lucrative career in restaurant, retail store and amusement park theme design. He was involved in theme work for two world's fairs, Universal Studios Hollywood, Sea World and Winchester Mystery House, among others; this portion of his career culminating in Northern California when he was named art director for Great America Amusement Park.

Regardless of his success in the commercial theme design industry, Price's passion for Luiseno Indian culture would soon take over his life, both professionally and creatively.

"About 20 years ago I started instructing and teaching Pechanga culture, which is the Luiseno culture, to the people," Price said. "It was savagely taken from them and they were occupied for over 300 years under the influence of Europeans and that really takes away a person's culture when they aren't practicing it and inbreeding with Europeans and such. So, that's what I taught them; the old way. I would give them demonstrations of everything from flint



Above, "Rogue's Bride" will be part of the exhibition of the artwork of Paul J. Price, pictured at right, at the Gallery at The Merc in Old Town Temecula.

mapping to basket weaving."

Soon Price was helping to establish the first Luiseno cultural center for the Pechanga reservation. He became quite well known amongst the tribal leaders and when it came time for the tribe to establish their financial independence through gambling, they utilized Price's talents and education.

"I did the restaurant and I incorporated rock art and arti-

facts and their star logo and design work into the carpeting," Price said. "It was so successful that some of the other casinos started taking that approach of actually showing their own culture through the art. They liked it so much that when they did get more funding and hired an architectural firm from Los Angeles and an interior designer from Las Vegas they said that Paul Price will be the Creative Director

and be responsible for any of the décor that deals with Indians."

For his Temecula exhibition, viewers will definitely see pieces of work displaying the culture that Price worked so hard to preserve, however it is not the main theme Price wants to portray.

"I did a little bit of soul searching and I decided that I

► PRICE, 18

Main Event

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2008 / THE CALIFORNIAN

► PRICE

Continued from 17

wanted to do art that I just felt I wanted to do and not have a commission or theme attached to it; total freedom. So I took two years off and just painted," he said.

In those two years, Price completed forty-two surrealist works; most examining one of society's eternal flaws in judgment.

"I don't really like the pressure that society has put on women to look a certain way in order for them to commercially sell products and goods," he said. "This was the challenge. I started questioning what our society considers ugliness and what is beauty? But as a complete definition, I couldn't write anything down.

"So I started to consider what do we really consider ugliness by comparison? I compared women all over the world and what I came up with was that what is considered beauty is perfect balance and there is no real ugliness. It's all a matter of opinion. You can find beauty in the ugliest of God's creatures, the most frail and the most deformed. If you can just take the time to step away from commercialism you can find beauty."

In addition to society's view of feminine beauty, Price's work also raises the question of what women can do to preserve the environment.

"I feel that women have not played a major role in environmental issues. It's still sort of looked at as a kind of man's world," he said. "So, I've taken my figures, which are surrealistic, and I've placed them over western Riverside County's en-

vironmental issues and other issues pertaining to water. So, you sort of have a duel whammy there."

Price describes a particular work, entitled "Silence Gives Consent," as an example of this technique.

"One of my images has a figure who is handcuffed and she has both thumbs in her mouth as she is looking longingly with her stare and her hair is shaped like wings as if she wants to fly away and escape and, in the background, is one of those red carbon-type sunsets," Price said. "The biggest contributor to the darker clouds is the factory fumes. But it's not blatant. It doesn't slap you around. You have to look beyond the image in front of you and really start seeing what's there. Yes, our hands are tied. We can't really say things when we're working for various employers and we all have the desire to escape from it."

This and other works are on display from Friday to Oct. 5 at the Gallery at The Merc, 42051 Main Street in Temecula. There is no admission fee for the gallery during normal business hours, 2-6 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays.

Price hopes his viewers will leave the exhibit reexamining their opinion of what is beautiful.

"What's wrong with the simplicity of a woman; a clean body with a smile that hasn't been forced on with chemicals or eyes that aren't dripping with mascara and hair that's not tacky," Price said. "I know I'm probably a dreamer but I wish there was something art could do as far as the entrenched of this materialist culture as to what women must endure."