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Place Matters: Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California as Site and Insight

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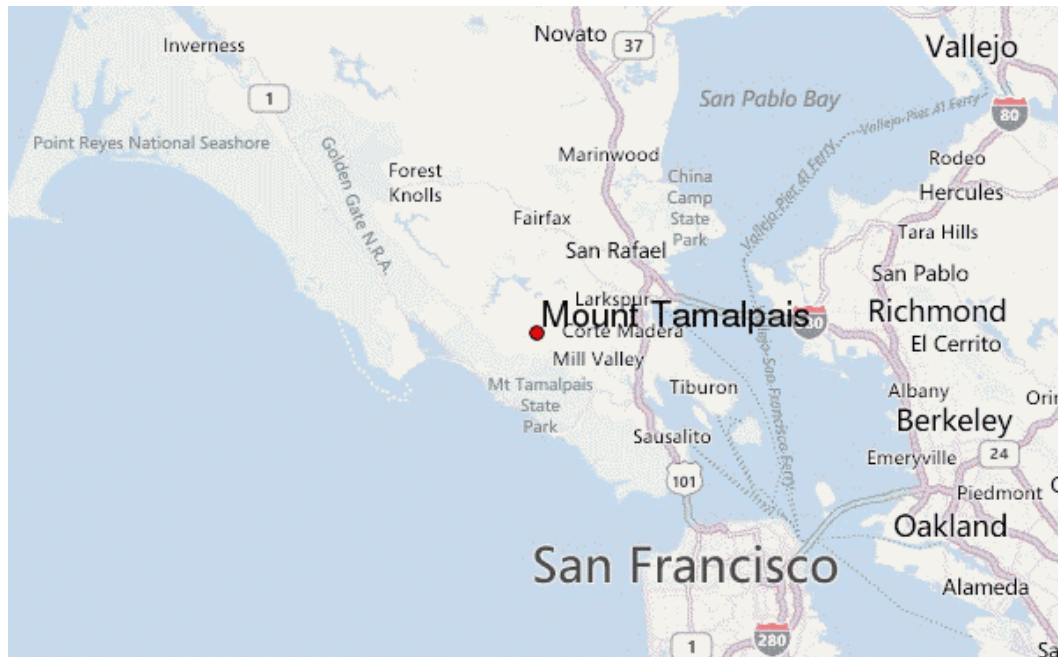
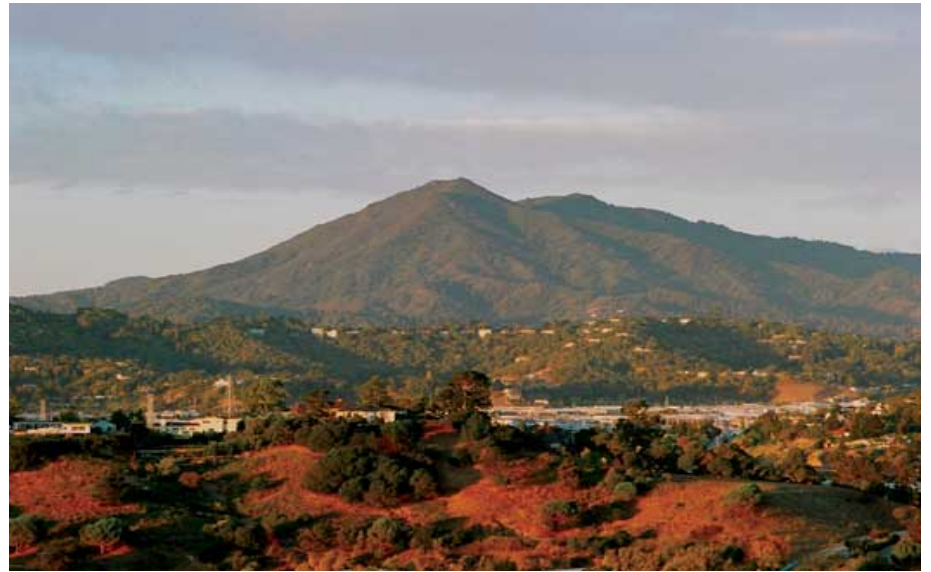


“Place Matters: Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California as Site and Insight”

Dr. Leslie Ross,
Professor and Chair of Art History,
Dominican University of California

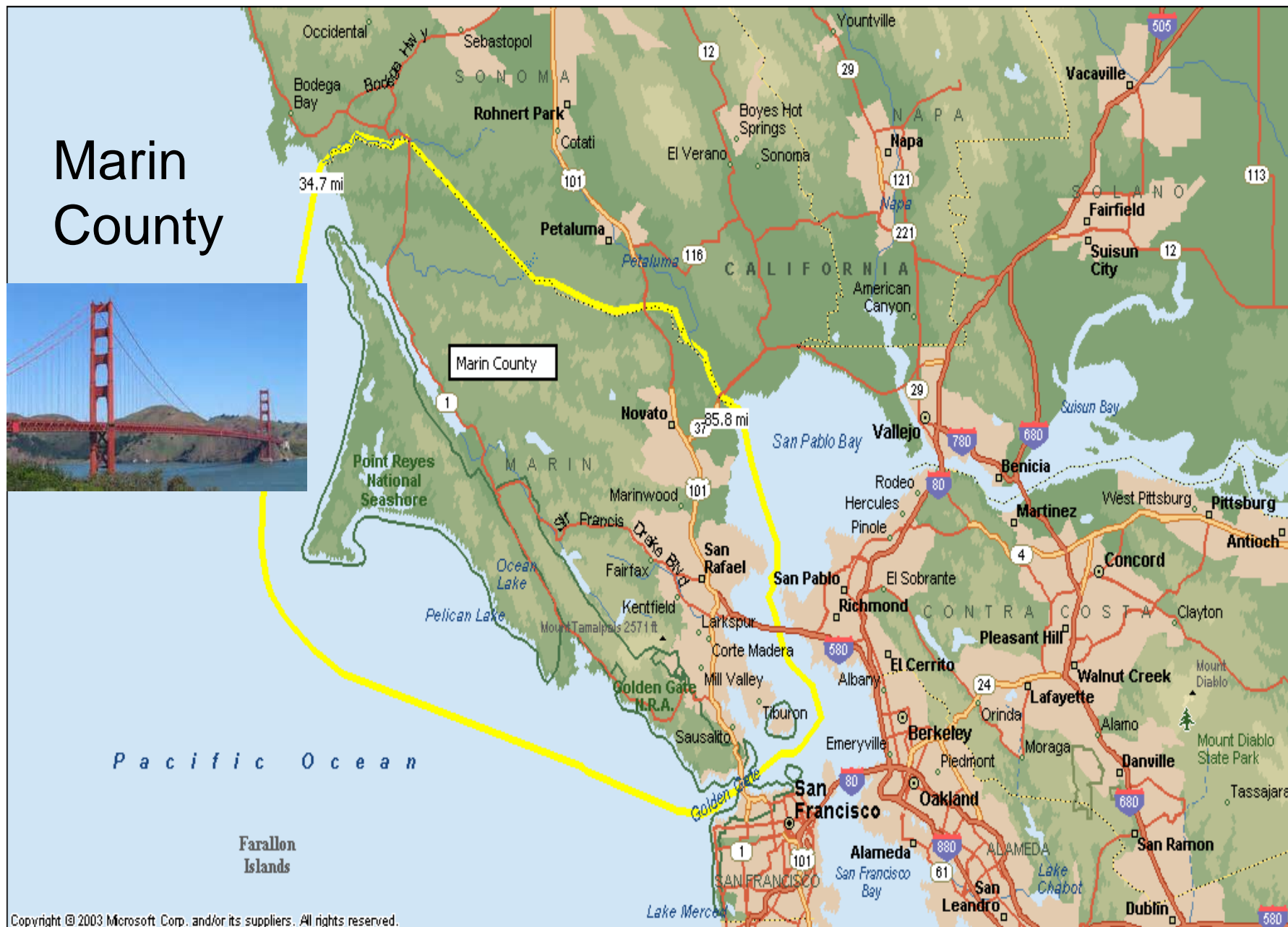
AGLSP Conference
San Jose, CA
October 2015





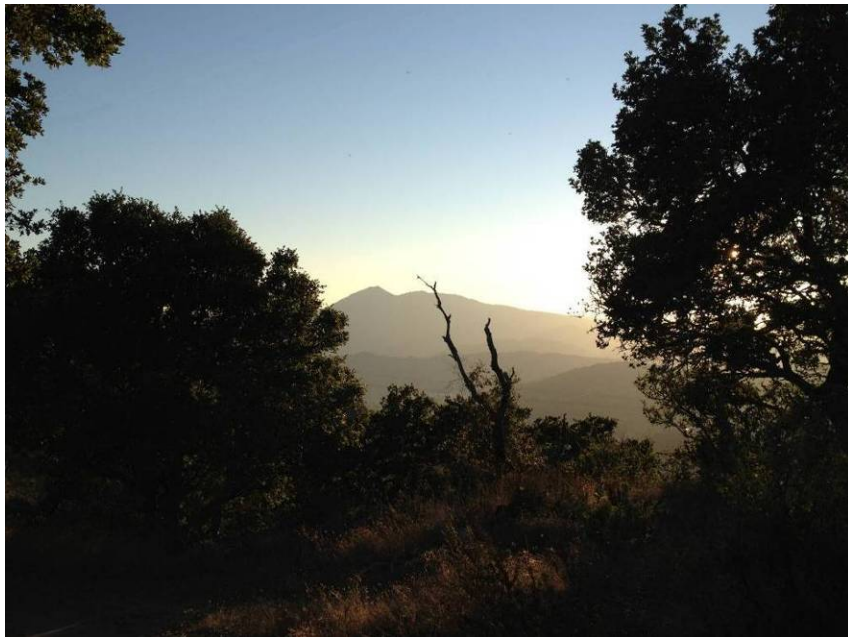
Mount Tamalpais (or “Mt. Tam”) is doubtless the most visually significant landscape feature in Marin County, California -- not only for native Marinites but for new-comers to the region.

Marin County





Although only about 3000' tall, Mount Tamalpais is the highest peak in Marin County, CA.



Mt. Tamalpais can be seen from:
Marin County, San Francisco,
the East Bay, Sonoma County...

... and from the campus of

Dominican University of
California.



A small, private, liberal-arts based university, Dominican's "General Education" curriculum includes its signature "Colloquium" requirement: sets of paired and thematically-linked courses from different disciplines which students take together in one semester.

Such as...

“Mount Tamalpais: Past, Present and Future”



Course 1 (Humanities
and Cultural Studies):
The Meanings of Mount
Tamalpais



Course 2 (Art History):
The Art of Mount
Tamalpais

Two courses
with shared
themes...

T/Th afternoons:

1:40-2:55

3:05-4:20

This faculty-designed and approved colloquium is now in it's four year, and has proven to be one of the most popular amongst students.



The two linked courses work together to focus on Mount Tam from a wide range of perspectives:

- geological
- historical
- artistic
- mythological
- literary
- spiritual
- and ecological

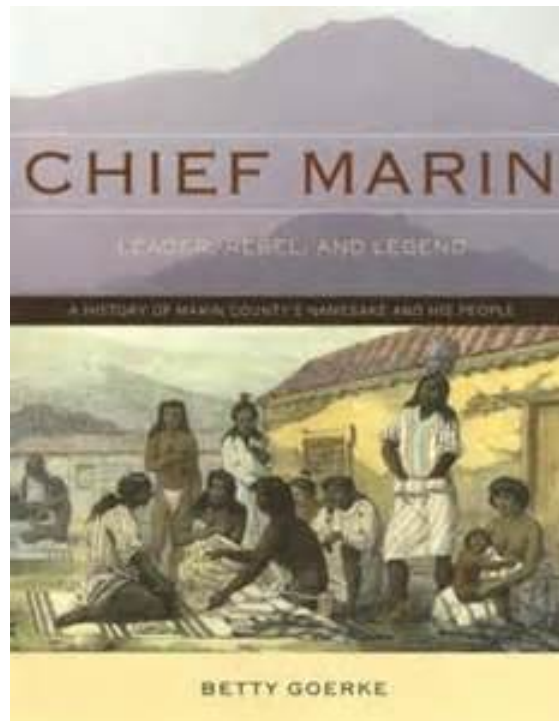


Mount Tamalpais in Marin County gives us a sense of PLACE... a focal point... as do many other landscape features elsewhere in the world.



The Art of Mount Tamalpais

This course focuses on Mt. Tam as the site, subject and inspiration for the visual, literary, and performing arts from native/indigenous Marin cultures to the present day.



It covers:

- the archaeological/material remains of indigenous cultures in Marin
- the changes in art and architectural styles pursuant to European colonization of the Bay Area
- the development of landscape photography and landscape painting in the nineteenth century
- and includes significant discussion of twentieth century and contemporary artists (both visual and literary) for whom Mount Tamalpais has served as inspiration.

Focus: Mt. Tamalpais as the subject and inspiration for the visual and literary arts from past to present – within the wider context of history, culture, and landscape art generally.



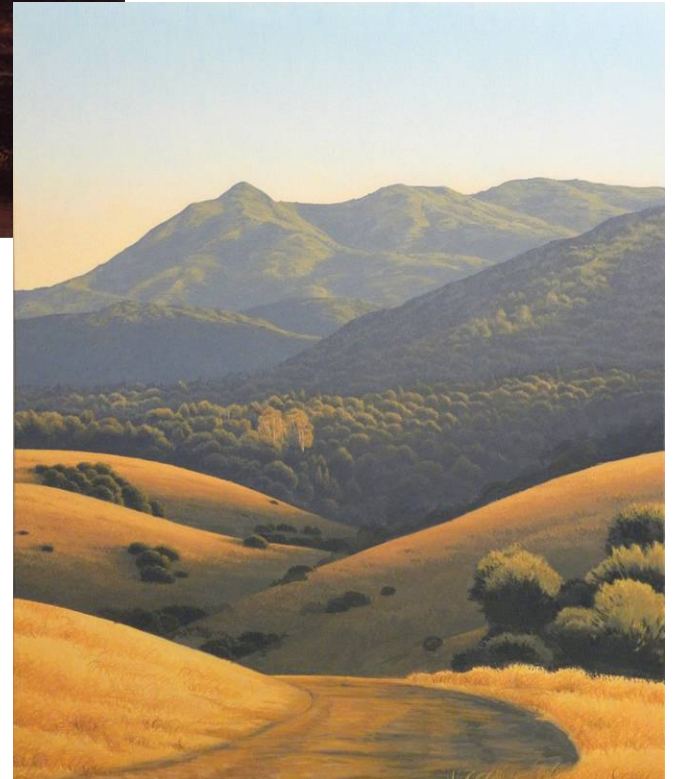
The “Art of Mount Tamalpais” is an Art History-based course, thus, we devote significant attention to LOOKING AT and ANALYZING art.

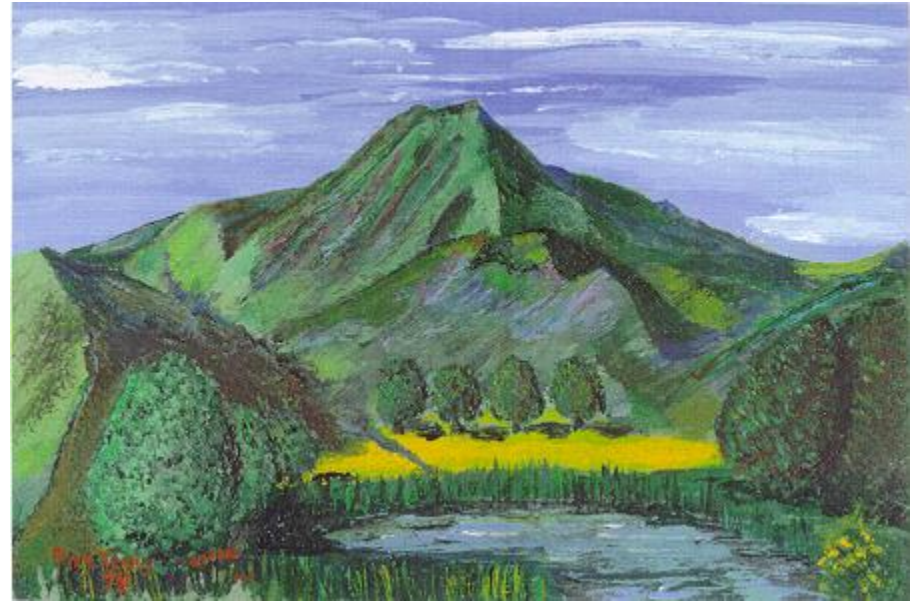
Focusing upon LANDSCAPE depictions...





Many visual artists, over the ages,
have been inspired to depict
Mt. Tamalpais...





...from vastly
different
angles/
perspectives/
points of
view...



...and in different media.



Wood-block printing



Ink painting



Oil painting



Acrylic painting

This course takes the opportunity to see and discuss how artists – through the ages - and from diverse cultures – have approached the subject of LANDSCAPE

- documenting
- imagining
- interpreting
- re-creating



What we see (and/or what we may *overlook*.)

It is designed to be an “eye-opening” course...

Careful looking and visual analysis skills are fostered in this class via several means:

- in-class guided discussion of images
- outdoors experiences with landscape-viewing/artistic and written responses
- hands-on workshops in specific art techniques
- field trips to Bay Area art museums
- meeting local landscape artists (“guest speakers”)
- AND !!! curating and installing an exhibition of “The Art of Mount Tam” in the Dominican University Library gallery

Because Mt. Tam is basically “in our back yard” in Marin...

...it is quite easy to visit and to view this “site” via off-campus field trips...



...even to take a short “hike” on Mt. Tam and visit the Muir Beach/Muir Woods areas...



...or, to ask the course students to view Mt. Tam from the Dominican campus... and to record their impressions in visual and written form.



To whom this may concern,
I sit here watching, staring at Mt Tam
It's a dark gray haze to me, tucked behind
layers of yellow & green. Now your turn, give it
life! Give it movement. Come join me here.
-Will Luong



We correlate their “perspectives” and “points of view” in this *class exercise* to the “perspectives” and “points of view” represented by other past/present people to their landscape surroundings – real or imagined.

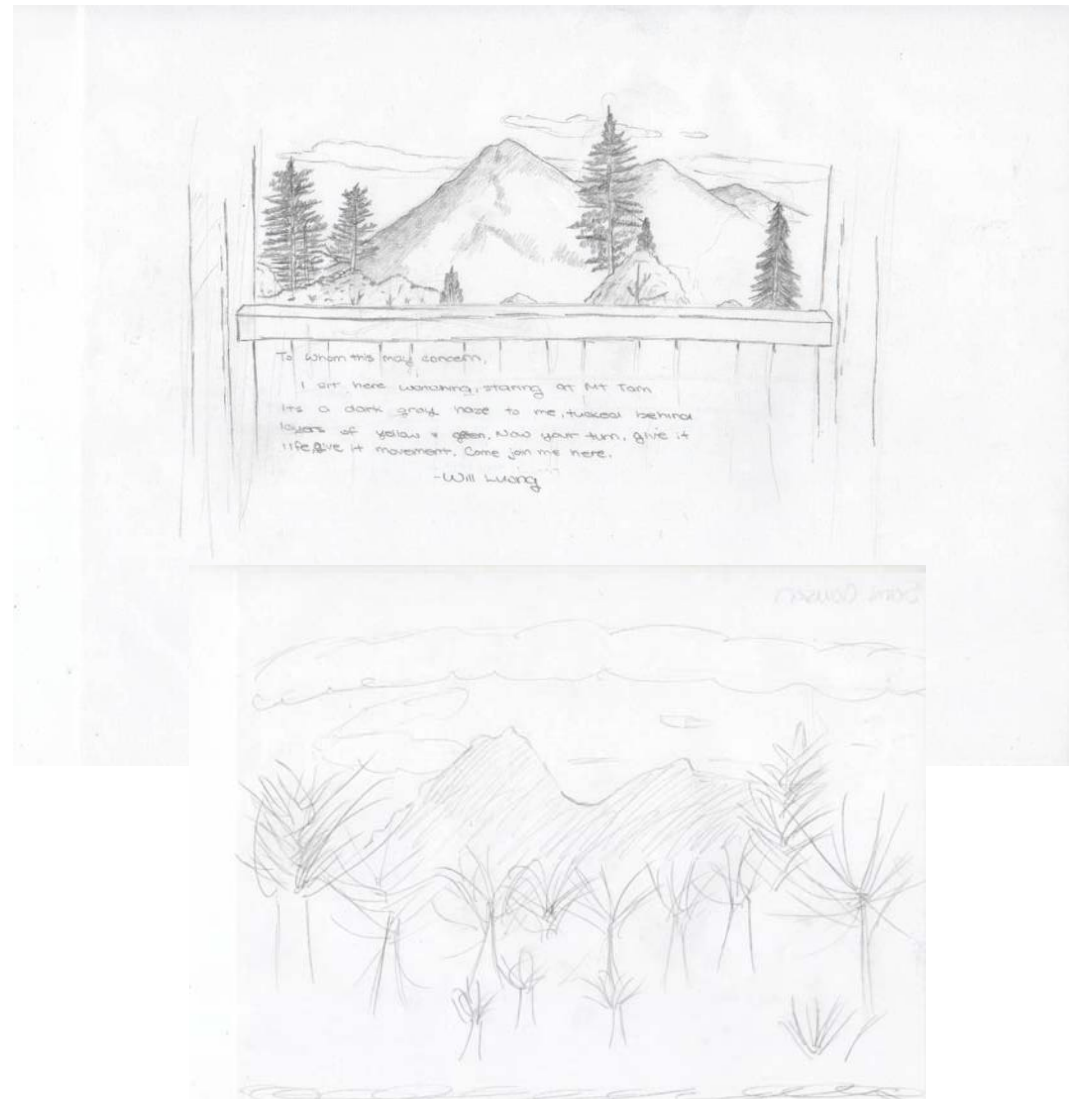


Careful looking...

Reflection...

Taking time to notice,
and to think about one's
relationship to the
“natural world” *wherever*
one is situated.

These are the goals
shared by both courses.

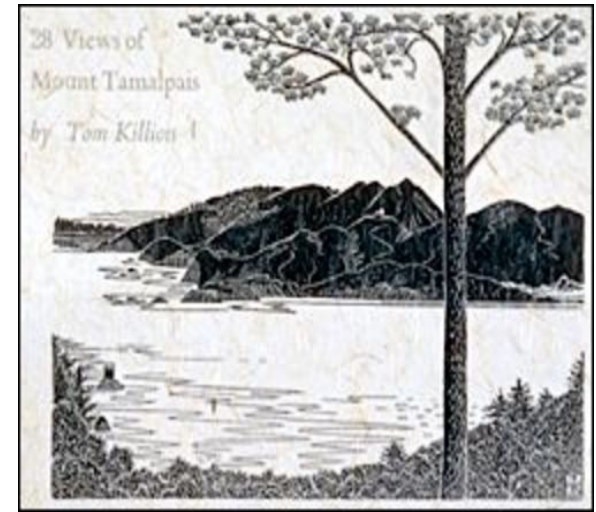
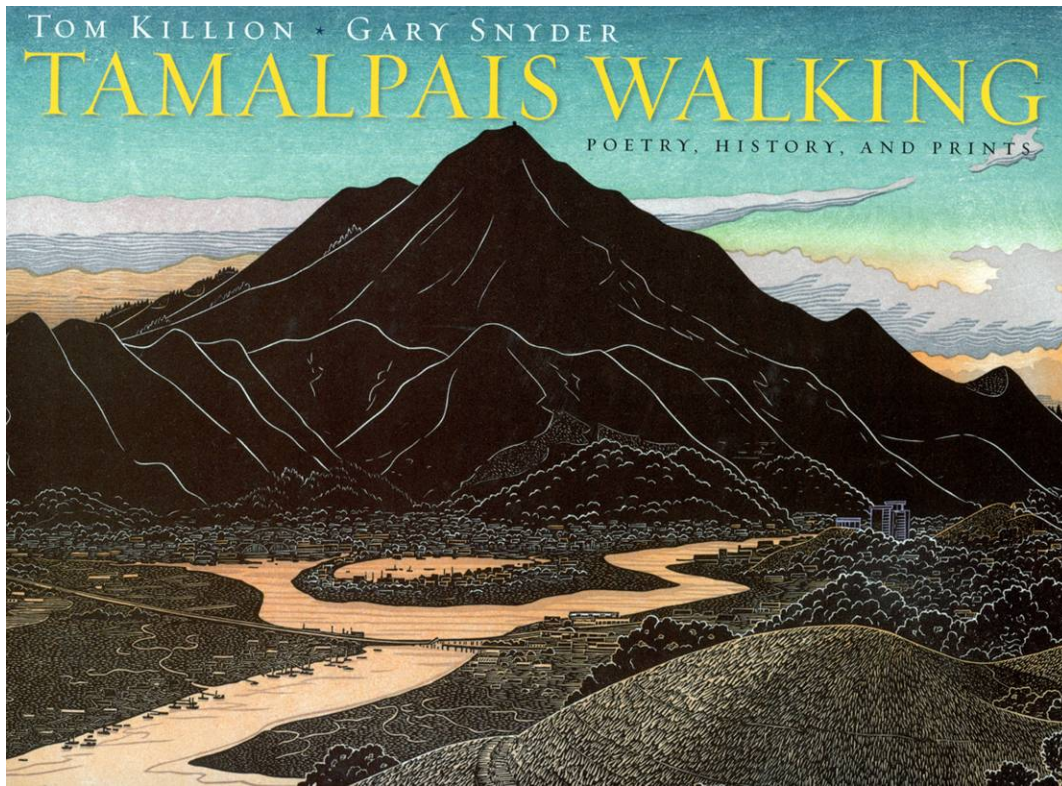


... because “Mt. Tam” has been the site and subject for artistic inspiration for so many artists (past and contemporary.)

Students in the course are introduced to artists such as:

TOM KILLION



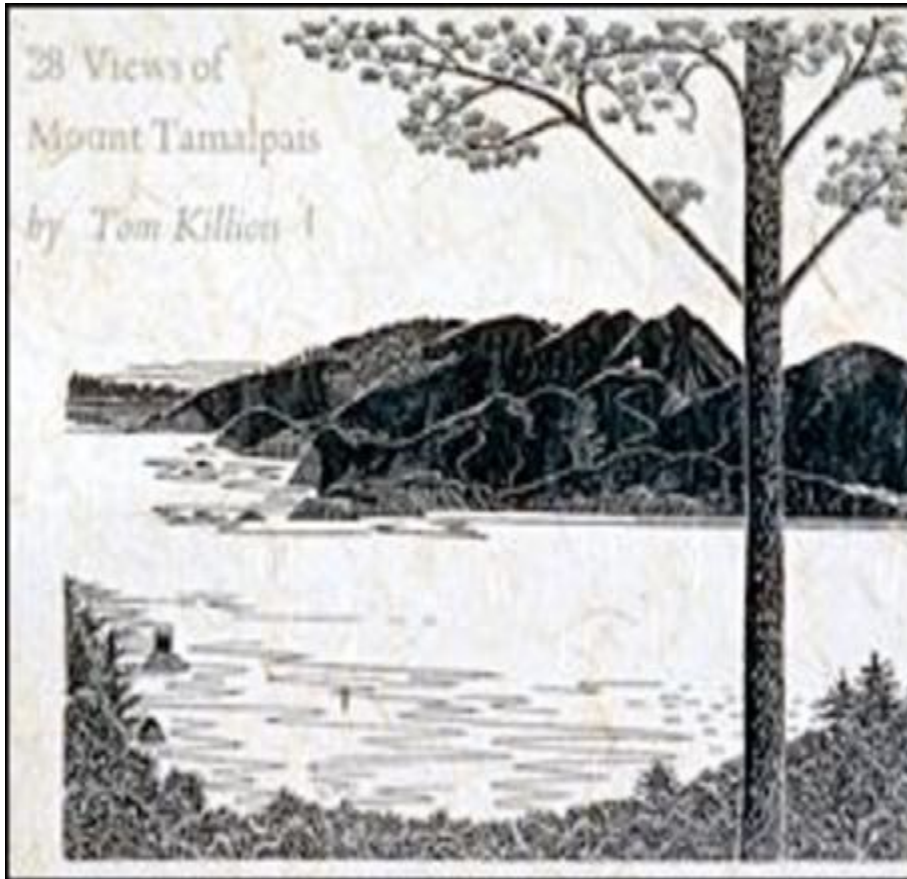


Whose remarkable and internationally acclaimed series of prints and book publications began in the 1970s with his:

28 Views of Mount Tamalpais



Inspired by the 19th century Japanese artist, Hokusai (36 Views of Mt. Fuji)





Tom Killion's wood block prints were featured in the first student-curated exhibition for the "Art of Mount Tamalpais" course in 2012.



For students to gain an understanding of and experience with the printing-making process, we offered a special workshop.

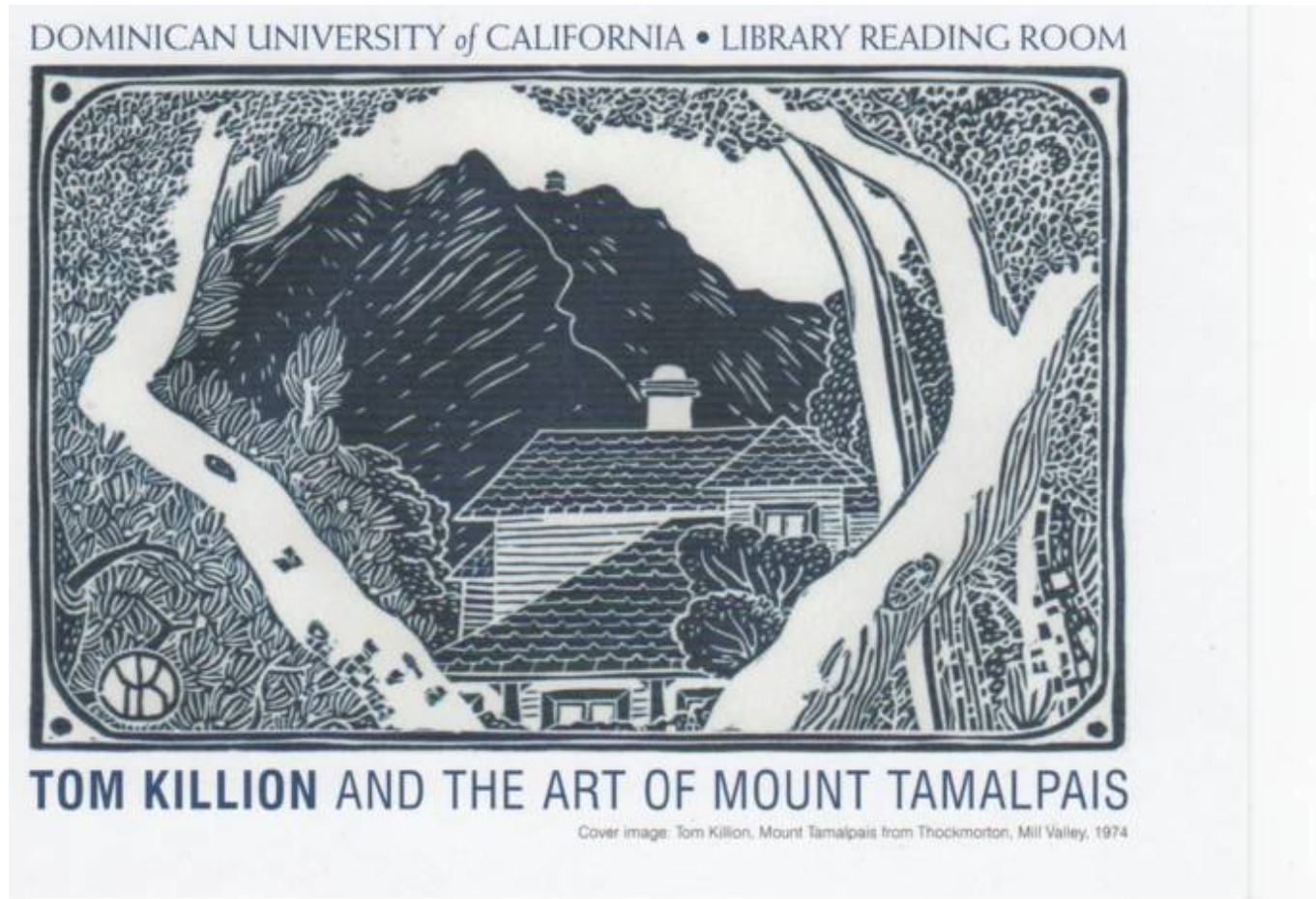


...in basic drawing and printmaking.



The students loved this!

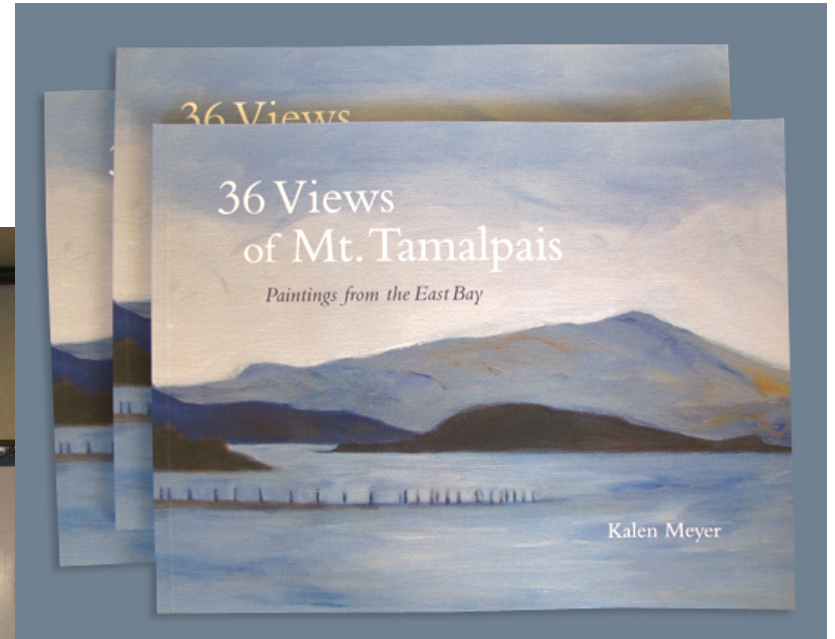
The student-curated exhibition of Tom Killion's works in 2012 was a *huge* success!

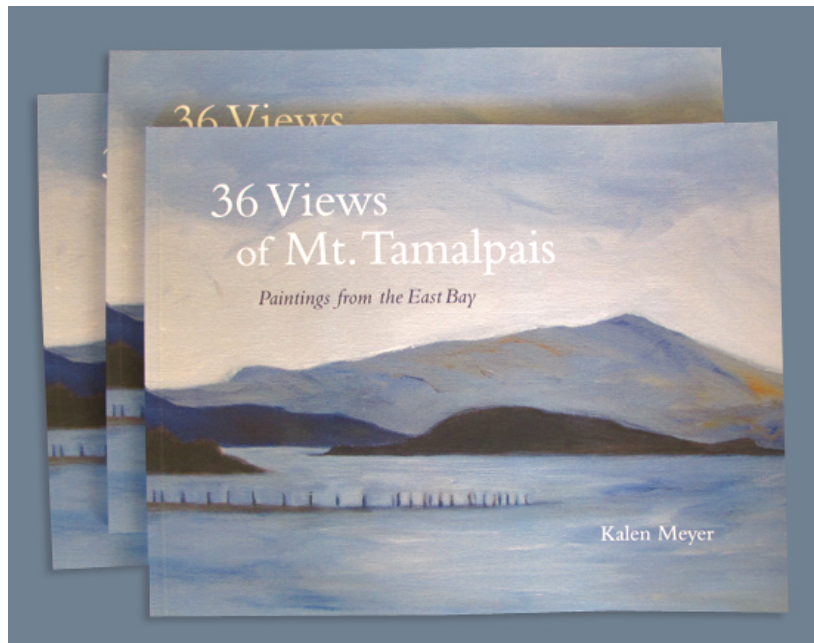




The next year, I introduced students to another local artist:

Kalen Meyer





Kalen Meyer's acrylic paintings:

36 Views of Mount Tamalpais

provided a focal point for the class in 2013.





Students met the artist, and successfully selected a sampling of her “Mt. Tam” paintings for the exhibition.





THE DEPARTMENT OF ART, ART HISTORY AND DESIGN
AND COLLOQUIUM PROGRAM
PRESENTS

THE ART OF MT. TAMALPAIS

Featuring works by Kalen Meyer,
Tom Killion and others

NOVEMBER 15 - DECEMBER 20

Students were given responsibility for this. And they were proud of their work!

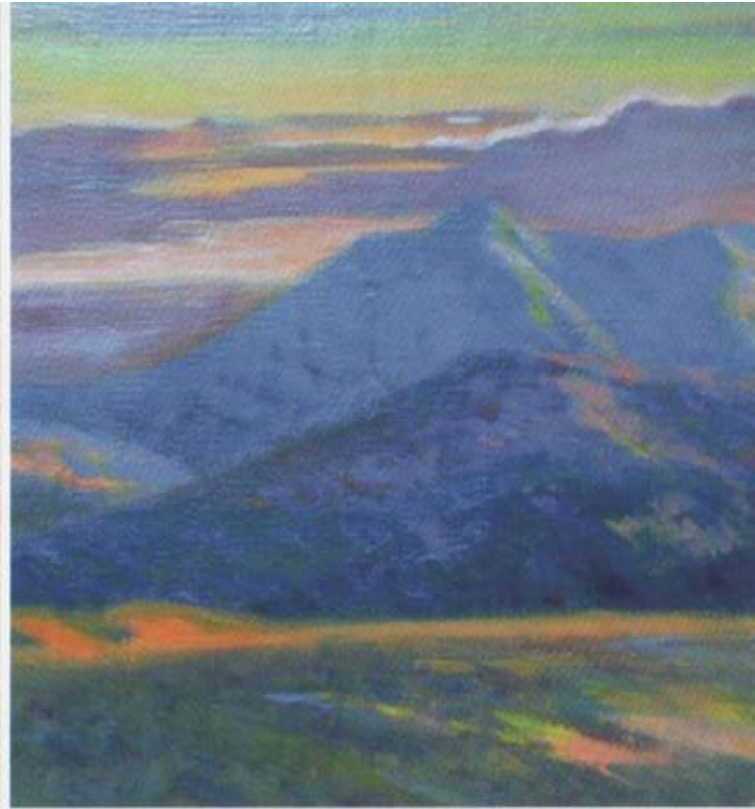




Although it was a
bit hectic
at times,
all worked out!



Last year (2014) the class exhibition also featured two local artists:



**Kett Zegart and
Katie Horacek**
The Art of Mount Tamalpais

November 12 –
December 19

LIBRARY READING ROOM
DOMINICAN CAMPUS





Margaret Jean Kettunen
Zegart ("Kett")



Copper engravings





...and Katie Horacek

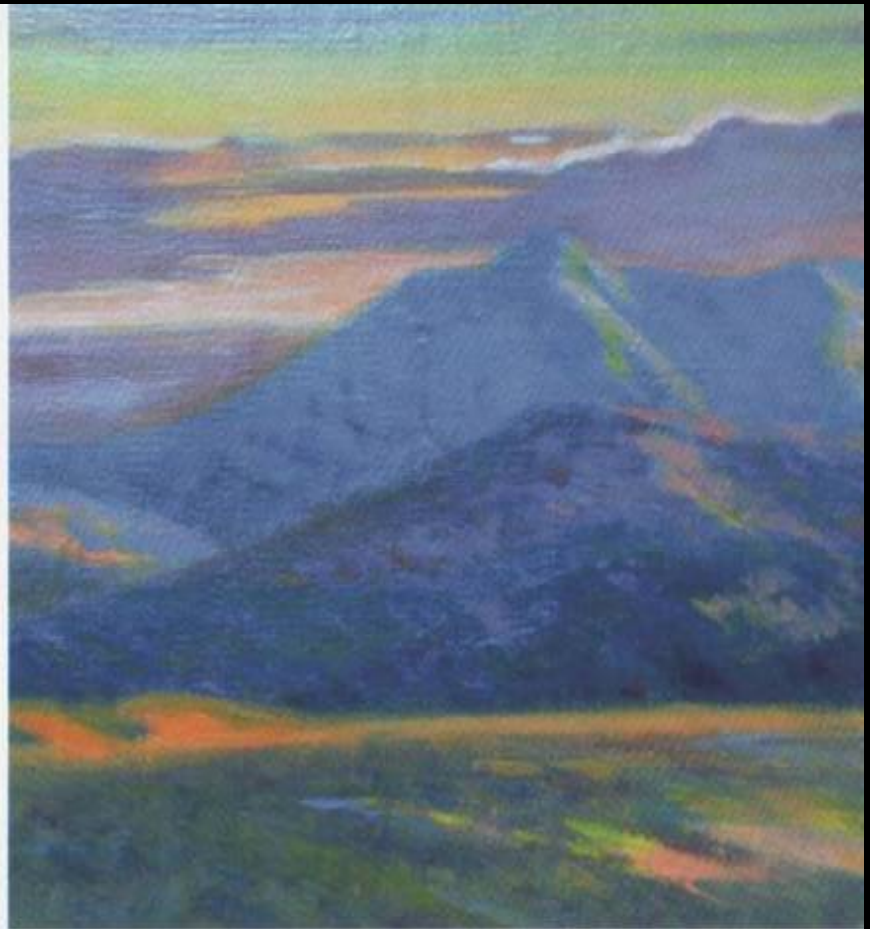


Oil and pastel paintings



Both artists were invited to speak to the course students about their different works/techniques in printmaking and in painting.





**Kett Zegart and
Katie Horacek**

The Art of Mount Tamalpais

November 12 –
December 19

LIBRARY READING ROOM
DOMINICAN CAMPUS





This was, yet again, another great experience for students (mostly NOT Arts majors) to meet artists...



...and to "curate" and
"install" an art show.



THE DEPARTMENT OF ART, ART HISTORY AND DESIGN
COLLOQUIUM PROGRAM
50 ACACIA AVENUE
SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA 94901

November 12 – December 19, 2014

LIBRARY READING ROOM

ALEMANY LIBRARY, DOMINICAN CAMPUS

Kett Zegart and Katie Horacek

The Art of Mount Tamalpais

ARTISTS RECEPTION

November 16, 2014

5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

ALEMANY LIBRARY HOURS

Mon.–Thurs., 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Friday, 8:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m.

Saturday, 9:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.

Sunday, 2:00 p.m.–12:00 p.m.

Closed, November 11

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

DR. LESLIE ROSS AT LESLIE.ROSS@DOMINICAN.EDU

cover image: Left: Kett Zegart, *Redwoods from a Rise on Throckmorton*, 1997
Right: Katie Horacek, *Mount Tam Evening*, 2014





**Mardi Horowitz and
Cindy Pavlinac**

The Art of Mount Tamalpais

November 11 –
December 18, 2015

LIBRARY READING ROOM
DOMINICAN CAMPUS



This fall 2015, students are working with two other local artists...



Mardi Horowitz
and
Cindy Pavlinac



© Cindy Pavlinac Photography



**Mardi Horowitz and
Cindy Pavlinac**
The Art of Mount Tamalpais

November 11 –
December 18, 2015

LIBRARY READING ROOM
DOMINICAN CAMPUS



Sumi ink style painting

Photography



Recent workshop on Sumi ink painting







Previous workshops
on print-making...

reflective writing...



... designed to give students
an enhanced perspective.

... for local/global issues.

Place matters.



Thank you! ✨ Dr. Leslie Ross
(leslie.ross@dominican.edu) ✨