

Introduction to Deladier Almeida Catalog

By Kevin Starr

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For ten years I had the privilege of serving as California State Librarian. Since there are more than one thousand public libraries in California, my job entailed flights to and from Sacramento. I preferred daylight flights into the state capital because the landing patterns at the Sacramento International Airport afforded me an opportunity to enjoy landscapes out of the backgrounds to Italian Renaissance paintings as the Southwest plane descended towards the runway.

In each case – the landscapes glimpsed in the distance from the windows and doors of Italian Renaissance interiors or the vast landscapes unfolding below me as the flight descended in its pathway – I encountered comparable presentations of natura naturans (nature being nature) fused with presentations of nature as art, geometry, and design on an heroic scale.

I learned to love the great Sacramento Valley as experienced from a descending arc as much as I had always loved glimpses of artful landscapes seen from windows and doors of interiors serving depictions from classical, Biblical, or Renaissance times. And thus also, having been introduced to the work of Deladier Almeida, I began to experience the Sacramento Valley in a new way: by indirection, by suggestion, by what was depicted, and by what remained off-canvas, namely, the human creativity that had gone into the making of these landscapes on such an heroic scale. These ordered and intersecting fields and orchards, these tree-guarded rivers and canals, this repose of level and gently sloping places, this array of Italian Renaissance color: all this delights me as much as those landscaped backdrops of the Renaissance.

Who created this world, this California, I asked myself in sheer wonderment? From whence comes these Virgilian suggestions brought to such a scale? O brave new world that has such farmers and artists expressing themselves in patterns and colors on the land for our delight? Are these the colors of agriculture, I asked myself? Or the colors of art? Or the colors of art and agriculture reconciled in a new alembic called California? Is this landscape for real or is it imagined? The answer is simple. This landscape is at once art and reality because California is both. The Sacramento Valley is at once as real as the landscapes glimpsed

from a passenger jet descending at 2,000 feet – and as reimagined as the superb canvases in this catalog. I am grateful to the farmers of greater Sacramento for creating these landscapes in time and history. And I am grateful to Deladier Almeida for helping me to see just how serene and majestic they are.