

Austin McKinzie

Rest



AUSTIN MCKINZIE’s landscape paintings in his first solo exhibition at CACHE entitled *Rest* emerge from a sustained engagement with “the other California” — the off-the-beaten-path places on the Central Coast and in and around the Central Valley — an agricultural region long rendered, when rendered at all, in a familiar agrarian vernacular. But McKinzie’s California does not occupy that obvious and often sentimental artistic terrain, nor is it the grand and imposing wild terrain of Ansel Adams, nor the majestic confabulations of Albert Bierstadt. Through his eye, wherever the artist stands is holy ground; the commonplace becomes a site of genuine ecological and perceptual complexity: the illuminated regimentation of fertile groves and vineyards emerges as a subject as worthy of sustained looking as Monet’s repetitive haystacks and Lombardy poplars. A coastal inlet modestly conveys peace rather than grandeur, palms loom not as icons of sunny California but as sentinels standing guard in the dark void of night.

Working both in the studio and en plein air, McKinzie translates the land into an intimate, embodied vocabulary for the light and terrain of the southern San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada foothills, bringing forward anthropogenically altered subjects too often left off the table or reduced to backdrop. In doing so, he brings the Golden State’s most underexposed region to the forefront for reconsideration — restoring a restful poetry to what time has altered or land use conversion has displaced.

Central to McKinzie’s practice is the conviction that landscape is active, ever-changing, textured, and provisional rather than fixed or smoothed. This conviction takes formal shape in surfaces that oscillate between passages of representational clarity and passages of thick, gestural deconstruction that is reminiscent of Nicolas de Staël, or perhaps the gritty, encrusted surfaces of Lucian Freud. These varied approaches are held together by a consistent optics of light and an evenhanded palette-knife technique echoing the boldly physical paint handling that animates Edgar Payne’s scenes.

A Visalia native, McKinzie is building his career within the region he depicts, lending his work an insider’s specificity rather than an outsider’s romanticism. He has held exhibitions at The Creative Center (2022), CACHE (2023), the Lindsay Art Museum, and Arts Visalia (2025). His practice today is sustained largely through sales and private commissions, a testament to his deep and continuing engagement with the community whose landscape he documents.

This exhibition positions McKinzie’s paintings not as pastoral record but as an active inquiry into the ongoing negotiation between artist and medium in search of places of rest — moments that the viewer experiences as both concrete and unsettling, even as they unfold within an ever-shifting landscape whose atmospheric effects refuse to hold still.

- Aaron Collins

Above:

Austin McKinzie
Olives

2026

oil on panel

13” x 17”

IMAGE: Courtesy of the artist



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