



View from the Villa by Thomas Mann

## Gallery 113: Thomas Mann's *Italian Impressions*

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

**THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE GORGEOUS SCENERY, LUSCIOUS WINE, AND GOOD CONVERSATION WITH**

**FRIENDS**—and it's even better when you're in Italy, according to artist Thomas Mann.

"The landscape was breathtaking," said Mann, whose solo show *Italian Impressions* is on display at Gallery 113 through the end of February. "It's a lot like Santa Barbara wine country, but different, because you know you're in Italy. There's something about it that grabs you. I can't get it out of my mind."

Mann, an avid landscape artist, took his first trip to Europe at age 76 this past September as part of a plein air workshop with Marcia Burt, also of Santa Barbara. The workshop took place at Villa Fattoria Bacio in Tuscany,



Thomas Mann

and Mann also visited Florence and Rome, painting along the way. He came back rich with memories and experiences—and enough paintings to fill a solo show. "I remember everything—even what's not showing in the pictures. I'd like to go back," he commented.

Mann grew up in West Virginia, wandering the hills at an early age and honing his landscape artist's eye. He always asked for art supplies for holidays and birthdays, and when extra money wasn't available for supplies, he used what he could find. He is predominately self-taught, and reads a lot of art books and attends workshops, like that which took him to Italy. "I never thought I would be able to be an artist, because I thought you had to go to college," he said. "I never knew there was such a thing as a self-taught artist." Although there was no art department at his high school, he was encouraged by teachers who allowed him to draw on the chalk board with colored chalk for special occasions. Mann eventually joined the service, which brought him to California for the first time. He fell in love with the area and returned in 1963 to stay. He moved to Santa Barbara in 2003.

Mann is active in the Santa Barbara artist community and presently serves on the Board of Directors for Santa Barbara Art Association and Santa Barbara Studio Artists. He is also on the Student Art Fund committee and is a member of several art associations in California.

"I have a hard time explaining how it feels when I paint. I love the act of painting— just standing at the easel creating something," he said. "If I didn't have painting, I don't know what I would do. It keeps me alive."

Gallery 113 is located at 1114 State St in La Arcada Court. Hours are Mondays through Saturdays, 11-5pm and Sundays, 1-5pm. For more information, call 965-6611.



Villa Fattoria Bacio by Thomas Mann