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# **NEWS** from the Auto Club

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## **THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM AND AUTO CLUB GIVE LEGENDARY CALIFORNIA PAINTER DAY IN SUNSHINE**

### California Artist Fused Chinese Heritage with California Scenes

**(LOS ANGELES, Oct. 31, 2007)** — Jake Lee, a highly respected, yet quiet and enigmatic painter who influenced numerous other artists in California for decades, has not been the subject of a major retrospective, until now. “Sunshine & Shadow: In Search of Jake Lee” an exhibition hosted by the Chinese American Museum of Los Angeles, co-produced with the Automobile Club of Southern California, marks the first comprehensive and critical review of a prolific artist who embraced California landscapes and city scenes through watercolor.

Showcasing at the Chinese American Museum (CAM) from Dec. 1 to October 25, 2008, “Sunshine & Shadow” will highlight more than 60 watercolors, including eight from the Auto Club’s WESTWAYS cover art collection. The collection will also illustrate with photos and letters more details of the artist’s professional career and his family life, which he kept distinctly separate for many years.

“Jake Lee is among the most well known and prolific watercolor artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, yet we found very little published about his personal life as we researched this exhibition,” said Dr. Pauline Wong, Executive Director of the museum. “We had no problem locating his art and his influence – it lives in collections throughout the state and in the hearts of his many students. But it was more challenging to find the man. We believe this exhibition and catalogue will result in new appreciation for his artistic production and his influence.”

Lee (1915-1991) worked steadily as a commercial artist and teacher. His first works fell squarely within the California watercolor tradition. Lee said he wanted to be known as a California artist – not necessarily a Chinese American artist. In the 1960s he was asked to produce murals and paintings that reflected Chinese culture in California settings, such as San Francisco’s Chinatown for the cover of WESTWAYS, and scenes from Chinese American history for Kan’s Restaurant (San Francisco).

“Lee’s depictions of Chinese American urban spaces, such as Chinatown balconies and storefronts, became a commercially sustainable side bar to his landscapes and rural scenes,” noted Matthew Roth, Auto Club historian. “The Auto Club’s member magazine, WESTWAYS, commissioned cover paintings from Lee nine times from 1954 to 1978, and these watercolors show in capsule his evolution into full engagement with Chinese aesthetic traditions.”

Gordan McClelland, noted authority on California art and co-author of *California Watercolors, 1850-1970* said: “Jake Lee was a talented watercolorist whose finest paintings combine an engaging blend of California Style watercolor painting with calligraphic brushwork reminiscent of his Chinese heritage. He was a key figure in a small group of California artists that carried on American Scene painting into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was highly regarded as a innovative and entertaining art instructor. This recognition is long overdue.”

The Chinese American Museum is located at 425 North Los Angeles Street in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, across from Union Station. Hours are 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday. Admissions are suggested donations of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and students.

The Chinese American Museum (CAM) is jointly developed and operated by the Friends of the Chinese American Museum (FCAM) and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, a department of the City of Los Angeles. Located at 425 North Los Angeles Street within the El Pueblo Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, CAM is housed in the last surviving structure of the City's original Chinatown. CAM's mission is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of America's diverse heritage by researching, preserving, and sharing the history, rich cultural legacy, and continuing contributions of Chinese Americans. For more information about the Museum, please visit [www.camla.org](http://www.camla.org).

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