



Photo credit: Katie Cleese

BONNIE PORTNOY lives just a few miles north of the enchanting Arts and Crafts house Tilden Daken built in Mill Valley, California, in the 1920s—unbeknownst to her until she launched the Tilden Daken Legacy Project to unearth the mysteries about the grandfather she never knew. Through the project, she made invaluable connections with art historians, museum curators, gallery owners, and avid collectors who helped her flesh out Daken’s long-lost story. In addition to family lore, she mined hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles, exhibit catalogs, personal letters, autobiographical short stories penned by the artist, and much more. Portnoy, a former merchandising and marketing executive at several San Francisco-based retail firms, lectures frequently about Daken at a wide variety of public and private venues.

[www.TildenDaken.com](http://www.TildenDaken.com)



“Tilden Daken lived during a golden age when artists, writers, and scientists championed the protection of landscapes that today are precious national, state, and regional parks. His works are a very personal expression of the life of a man who was a tireless adventurer and infectious painter. Bonnie Portnoy reveals the man and brings to us the world through his eyes and imagination. We owe a debt of thanks to her for her passion to see this through and to Tilden Daken for bringing these images to the world at a moment in history when the public voice first began to influence the preservation of these lands for all to enjoy.”

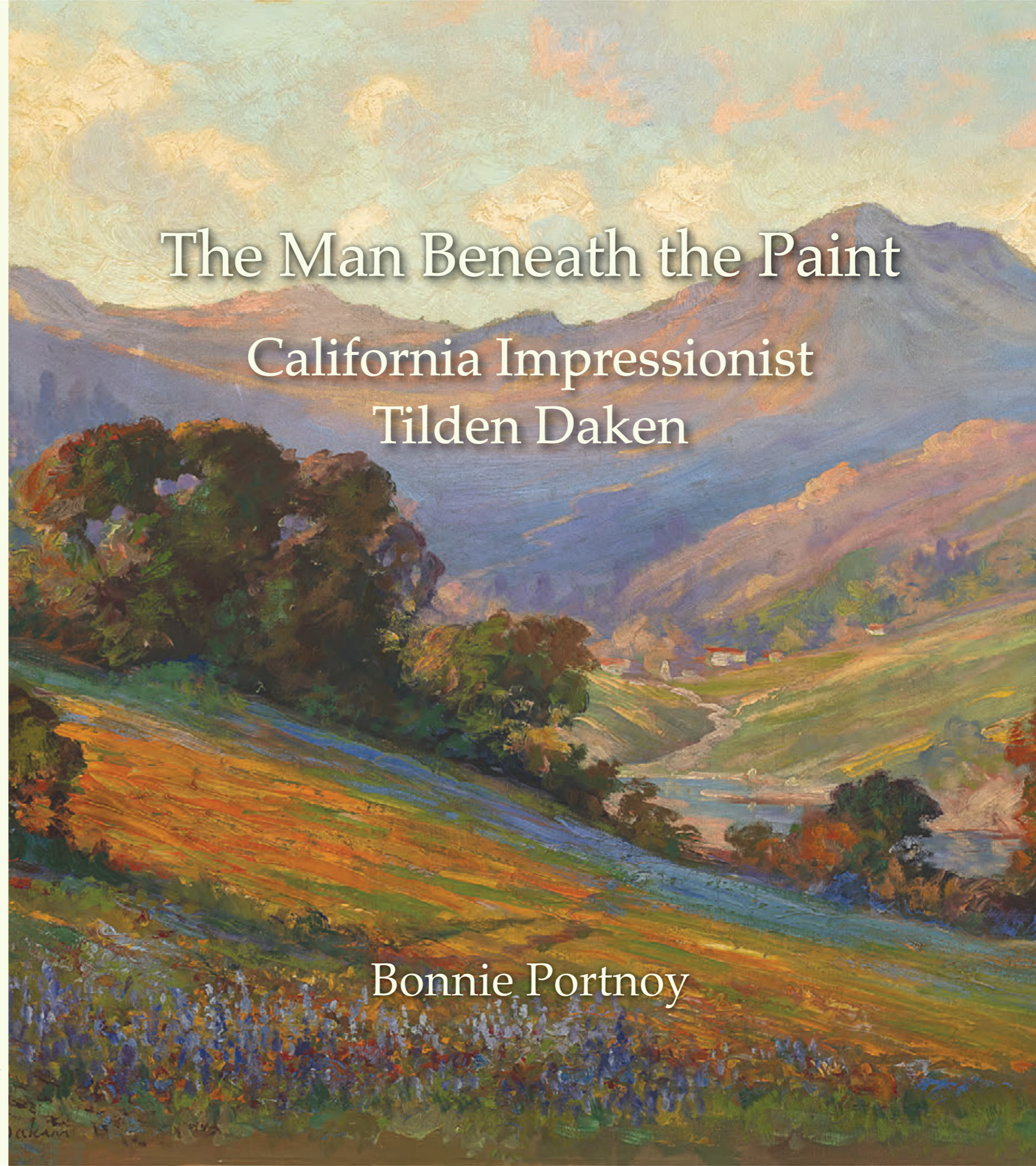
—Armando Quintero, Director, California State Parks.

Quintero leads the largest state park system in the country. He has served as a national park ranger, California Water Commission member, executive director of the UC Merced Sierra Nevada Research Institute, and elected member of the Marin Water Board and various cultural, parks, and volunteer organizations.

PORTNOY

The Man Beneath the Paint

JACK BACON & COMPANY



# The Man Beneath the Paint

## California Impressionist Tilden Daken

Bonnie Portnoy

**The untold, multifaceted story of one of the most adventurous and prolific landscape painters of the American West.**

California Impressionist Tilden Daken (1876–1935), famous in his day, painted in every California state park and national park in the West—from the redwood forests to the High Sierra—and beneath the Pacific Ocean in a custom-built diving bell. In *The Man Beneath the Paint*, Bonnie Portnoy, Daken’s granddaughter, has deftly defined his endlessly colorful life and indomitable spirit throughout the era of California Impressionism—from the early 1900s to the onset of the Great Depression. A close friend of writer Jack London, Daken lost his home and studio in San Francisco’s 1906 earthquake, got caught up in the Mexican Revolution, and participated in the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. A portrait of perpetual motion, he ventured on art expeditions to Mexico, Baja California, Hawaii, and the South Seas; spoke out against the oncoming forces of modern art; socialized with many famous personalities of his era; and demonstrated his sensory synesthesia to the Hollywood crowd, painting to music in the “key of red.” Notwithstanding his wanderings, frequent relocations, and persistent self-promotion, he painted constantly and with passion. His legacy lives on, thanks to the thousands of canvases he painted of California’s stunning scenery more than a century ago.



“Bonnie Portnoy is not hesitant to reveal family secrets. Alternating between biography and background history, she keeps the reader turning pages. Tilden Daken is revealed as a fascinating raconteur who pursued his own version of representational landscape painting. *The Man Beneath the Paint* is well-documented with endnotes and enhanced with family photos and many color illustrations of Daken’s paintings. It is a welcome addition to the ever-growing body of literature on California’s historic artists.”

—Nancy Dustin Wall Moure California art historian, prolific author, former curator for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and recipient of the 2022 Wendt Award from Laguna Art Museum.