

Sunday Afternoon on the Beach

JOHN NAVA HAS FILLED A WALL OF THE SULLIVAN GOSS WITH HIS BEACH-RELATED TAPESTRY, A SPIN TO SEURAT'S PAINTING 'SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON LA GRANDE JATTE'

By Josef Woodard
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'John Nava: Painting and Tapestry'

When: through December 31

Where: Sullivan Goss, 7 E. Anapamu St.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily

Information: 730-1460, sullivangoss.com



Sullivan Goss photos

"Big Platter"

"C street," writ large. In this art historicist view, though, the milieu is loaded, with artfully mannerist poses, mostly in profile or facing us. Anchoring the image, a stowaway woman with a parasol flown into the pictorial space, a kinfolk to a similar prominent figure in the Seurat painting, place formally in the foreground, diving the composition between surfer turf and beachgoers to the left.

While the tapestry aspect of the John Nava story may come as a surprise to some who know him primarily as a fine painter, this show comes as an after-effect ripple and artistic game-changer for the artist, whose massive tapestries can be seen in the striking post-modernist Los Angeles' Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, just off the 101 at Grand St. Originally creating epic paintings for the Cathedral, he was asked to transform the imagery into tapestries, partly as a way of buffering the overly open, cavernous acoustics in the space.

He went on to innovate techniques, using a special leviathan loom, for translating digital images of his old-school paintings to the tapestry state. In the case of "Big Platter," he intentionally dodged and blurred the surface effects to mimic the dotted rhythms of pointillism, whereas most of his tapestry work heeds a much more pristine and realistic visual code, in keeping with his fastidiously super-realist style of painting.

As added contextual-historical backstory, Seurat's pointillist style was

originally patterned to imitate the color-accruing effects of tapestry loom technology of the 19th century, bringing Mr. Nava's project a full circle or two. He is an artist with a keen interest in finding new ways to link and cross-reference time-honored techniques and artistic values with modern concepts and realities of our day, of which this project is an inspired example.

Speaking of the painting portion of this show (which also includes other media), the so-called "studies" for the finished tapestry are compelling paintings in their own right — such as the affectingly luminous "Parasol," the orange beach chair-equipped "Beach Figure," and "R. in Spotted Skirt (Study for the Big Platter)."

Certainly, part of the holistic, parts-about-the-whole quality of the exhibition makes a cause-effect connection between the massive end result on the wall and the component parts on view. We witness how the various pieces are put together in the finished horizontal beach panorama, with the original long painting "Big Platter" (rendered with his usual exacting visual refinement and brushwork) missing some figures and alterations which are seen in separate studies.

In Mr. Nava's new gallery show, the process of preparing for, contemplating and piecing together the end tapestry is both revealed and revealed in. There's more going on here than just painting-for-paintings sake, or for tapestry's sake, for that matter.



"Beach Figure - C"



"Parasol"



"C Street"

November 24, 2017 - November 30, 2017