



Sullivan Goss photos

'Study for the Good Land'

# Going Big, Still Staying Local

HANK PITCHER, LONG-FAVORED SANTA BARBARA-BASED PAINTER, EXPANDS HIS SCALE WITH HIS LATEST SHOW AT SULLIVAN GOSS

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent



## 'The Long View'

**When:** through February 2

**Where:** Sullivan Goss, 7 E. Anapamu St.

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

**Information:** 730-1460, [sullivanogoss.com](http://sullivanogoss.com)



'Summer at the Miramar'



'S Tubes'

One virtue of a passionate and subject-focused painter, over a course of years spent considering a given terrain, is an accrued kind of wisdom at the easel and in the perceiving. Painters, like other artists, but in a special and visually empathetic way, can tell us about the nature of the being and seeing, of a place, person or an attitude, or an area of speculation.

Hank Pitcher is one of those kinds of painters in our midst. The longtime Santa Barbaran who has been surfing, painting in his uniquely lucid, yet poetic and abstraction-coated and vaguely Georgia O'Keefe-esque style, teaching at UCSB's College of Creative Studies since 1971, and generally taking in and exploring the views in our strange paradise. His art invites us to reflect on the act of painterly vision, and to reflect on the very scenes we may know, and possibly love, such as the paintings of Hollister Ranch, Sedgwick Ranch, and Leadbetter Beach and more in Mr. Pitcher's 2011 show at Sullivan Goss, called "Tidal Force."

With the latest batch of Pitcher paintings at Sullivan Goss dubbed, "The Long View," the exhibition title arrives with multiple meanings. Temporally, it has to do with his more than four decades in the "field" (and beach and architectural scenery) as a painter very much rooted here, but there is also the simple, logistical matter of expanded scale, thanks to a new studio, and one with an ocean view.

Thus, in the new show, which is settled in the larger, middle gallery, Mr. Pitcher goes much more epic than usual, especially in the case of the painting-turned-indoor-mural, "Spring." Spread out over three large panels – adding up to a senses-consuming 45.5 x 204 inches – the artist gives us a sprawling account of the solitude and horizontal sweep, and the light and space, of the Deveraux slough and yonder beach, in a mural at once monumental and peaceably meditative.

Epic dimensions, though scaled back to a manageable 65 inch-ish width, also figure into the very expressive agenda of "Study for the Good Land" (as in Goleta's affectionate motto, applied to a beach-front panorama) and "Sedgwick Valley

Morning," capturing the rugged preserve and the secondary subject of morning light.

He also brings a special vision to the rare instances of architecture in his work. Mr. Pitcher's painting of the historic, affluent gathering spot that is Coral Casino, a recurring subject in the Pitcher oeuvre, is less a valentine to lavish excess than a cool-eyed tribute to an iconic structure in town, and one which spans generations and historical epochs. Not coincidentally, the compound is also a beach-hugging one, a vital part of the Santa Barbaran seascape, even if man made.

While the show "The Long View" is marked by its notable new moves into the bigger picture, so to speak, and the emotive-optical effects of horizontality, we also get a broader sense of what interests Mr. Pitcher, including a 1968 John Deere and his classic, semi-figurative surfboard "portraits."

From the rural-ish spaces and humble agrarianism of the Santa Ynez Valley to area beaches and surf hot spots in the region, Mr. Pitcher is still keeping busy, training his distinctive eye and painter's touch on a coveted slice of Godly/earthly acreage. In the process, he somehow manages to keep his aesthetic cool while expressing a genuine regionalist's wonder. From the beholder's end, we're all eyes and awaiting senses.

In the case of the new work, a few steps back are required to take it all in.