

Bodies of and in Work

SANTA BARBARA-BASED PAINTER ANGELA PERKO'S LATEST EXHIBITION AT SULLIVAN GOSS REVEALS HER INTEREST IN FIGURES AND LOCAL ARCHITECTURE

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent



'Angela Perko, 2013'

When: through September 1

Where: Sullivan Goss, 7 E. Anapamu St.

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

Information: 730-1460, sullivangoss.com



'Roses and Sunflowers'

In the ranks of regional painters with some gallery-track record, and therefore public awareness, Angela Perko is perched in a creative corner all her own. A vibrant stylist with nods to art history and no fear of color or formal bump and bustle, Ms. Perko has one of the more instantly recognizable styles of any artist calling Santa Barbara home.

She deals with the familiar stuff of landscape and still life, but tinged with fantastical aspects, and faint hints of artists lurking in the memory banks, from Henri Rousseau to Stuart Davis, and some post-Modernized glints of Van Gogh. In the latest of a few solo shows at Sullivan Goss over the past several years, Ms. Perko shows some of that strong leaning, including a geometrically crystallized view of the Gaviota Coast, and the over-saturated floral gush of the distinctly non-retiring "Roses and Sunflowers."

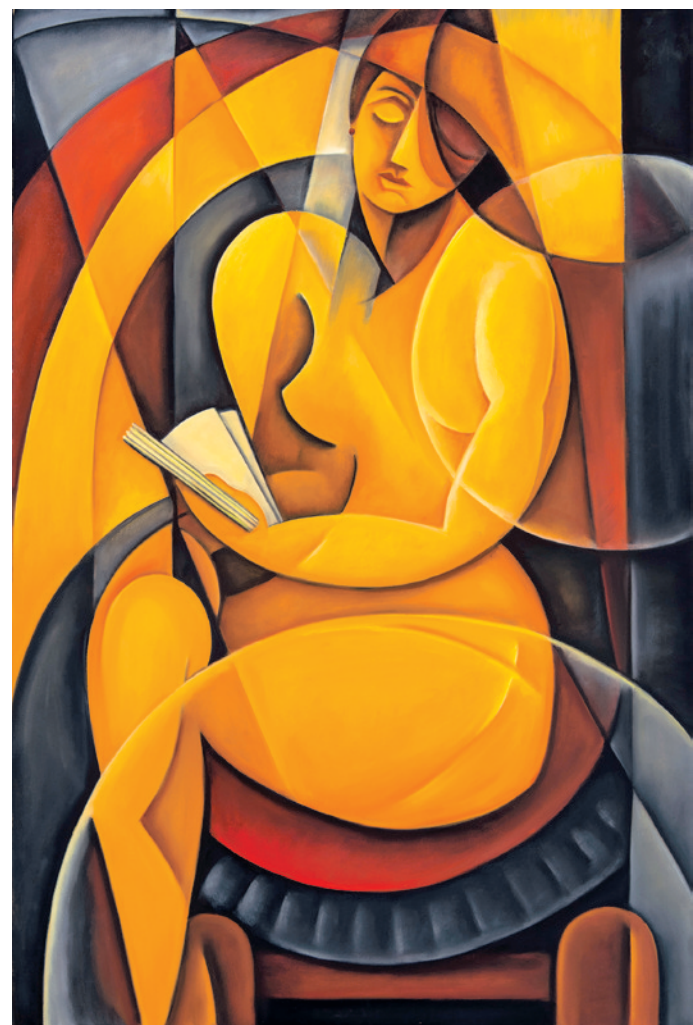
But the real news with the new exhibition finds Ms. Perko moving into some new terrain – or at least new to us outside onlookers. In short, the fresh angles in this show have to do with art about bodies (nudes, in full flower) and buildings, and with both series considered and manifested on her own singular terms.

In the front gallery of the deep Sullivan Goss venue, three large nude paintings hang like a triptych – or a trio of muses – and command attention, but gently. Varying degrees of realism and Cubist-flavored, planar tilting are at play in dealing with these paintings, growing progressively more abstracted from "Odalisque," to "Beyond the Ophanim" and, finally, "Woman with a Red Earring, Reading," its figure folded into an atmospheric design basking in the historical, radial radiance of Orphism.

These three graces have a warm, orange-to-amber-to-red glow about them in keeping with the painter's general unabashed warmth of palette. A fourth nude study, "Magnolia Scented Night," a veritable tribute to Rousseau's "Sleeping Gypsy," presents a reclining, presumably dreaming, nude woman by night, flanked by the brighter spectral splashes of yellow moon and magnolia.

Ms. Perko's nudes, which grew out of her interest in figure drawing classes, are generally removed from our daily experience, and exist in some archetypal, culturally encoded netherworld. Something else again happens as we take in her other series showcased in this exhibition – a set of smallish paintings dealing directly (well, relatively speaking) with classic examples of Santa Barbara architecture that we know and mostly love.

This is not to say that in this selective survey of local buildings of note, she plays her role as an architectural chronicler straight. That identifiable, "Perko palette," not to mention her visual and seemingly narrative imagination, is given a workout in these compact, but vivid canvases. Yellow and black are strong players in the color mix as she gives us new notions of famous local buildings – including the Lobero Theatre, the Museum of Art, and the Santa Barbara



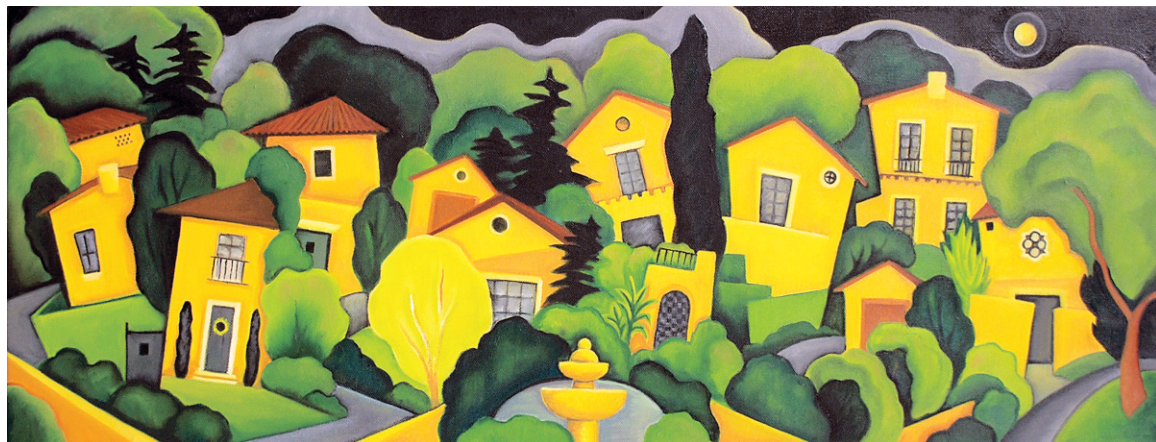
Sullivan Goss Gallery photos

'Woman with a Red Earring - Reading'

County Courthouse. The Church of Christ Scientist tilts and bulges, lurks and looms in the composition, its dome top reminding us of the Santa Barbara Street landmark, which has otherwise been filtered through a particular, painterly eye.

Of special interest in this striking series are her paintings of cohesively linked houses in the Plaza Rubio Street facing the Rose Garden and Mission, and the downtown series of houses known as Crocker Row. With these composite images, the artist goes to town, so to speak, with tumbling forms and shambling visual rhythms, suggesting village scenes half reconstructed from foggy, but fond memories.

In other words, our town has been "Perko-ized," and that's a happy and strange thing to behold.



'Plaza Rubio'