

Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery Joseph Goldyne: Waterfalls

By Kerry Methner / CASA

DIZZYING VERTICAL DROPS FLOAT between landscapes, top and bottom, in the mesmerizing six foot tall works of Joseph Goldyne. His recent series, *Waterfalls*, is the heart of an exhibit that opens 1st Thursday with a reception for the artist on April 5th from 5 to 8pm at Sullivan Goss.

Goldyne earned a BA in Art History from UC Berkeley before completing his MD at UC San Francisco and his MFA at Harvard University. He has devoted himself to the art world since his twenties, painting exhibitions for galleries like Braunstein Quay and John Bergruen and was a member of the acquisitions committee for the Fine Arts Museums for over 30 years. This is his first solo exhibition in seven years, when he started working on these new waterfall paintings. *He agreed to an email Q&A about his work, which is presented below.*

CASA: How did the power or presence of waterfalls or water as a metaphor or archetype influence your work?

Joseph Goldyne: Since childhood, I've always loved running water such as brooks and fountains, but waterfalls especially. I think their verticality, the grandeur of the drop, the roar that accompanies the descent – all these features makes each a unique and living subject, a presence both contemplative and threatening. However, the truth is that I have visited very few great falls in nature. When I set about to address the subject in 2005, I did think about making a pilgrimage to a number of them, but I soon decided against it, sensing that I felt them strongly enough to paint them and that what I really wanted was to invent them so they are 'felt' even more than depicted.

CASA: What role did improvisation play in creating this series?

Goldyne: Improvisation plays the principal role. None of these paintings was based on specific falls in nature. But just as nature gives one an infinity of permutations and combinations, so does the imagination. Another way to say it is that the painting leads the artist rather than vice versa.

CASA: Does this work carry on a dialogue with your previous work or with any of your colleagues work?

Goldyne: Recently, I looked back and found that I had done two small imaginary waterfalls in the late 1960s, so they must have been in my head even then. More significantly, I have been attracted to the vertical for several decades and created a good number of paintings in that format; etchings and monotypes as well.

With regard to colleagues and deceased exemplars, the waterfalls of Georgia O'Keefe (commissioned as part of a series of Hawaiian scenes by Dole Pineapple in 1939) had a great impact on me 30 years ago. Their influence at the time was for the general richness of the presentation, the verdant embrace of the falls by the lush landscape surrounding them. In other words, they benefitted from just those qualities for which O'Keefe was celebrated: exploiting the abstract and color potential of her subjects. But for the "sense" of falling that the depiction of a waterfall should communicate, of dropping from a height, it was what might be termed the drip images of Pat Steir that I believe have had considerable appeal. Before her work, the depiction of falls was of light on water or of a vaporous plume ascending from the crashing torrent. Nevertheless, we always find what was lacking as well as what was accomplished when we cite precursors. So, in the end, O'Keefe's richly colored interpretations were too classically pictorial and Steir's essentially non-representational interpretations seemed to avoid dealing with the majesty of nature's greatest water spectacles in exchange for a more perfect capture of the optical illusion and feel of dripping water. In brief, her more minimalist gestural approach was too minimal for my taste. I guess I wanted to deal with the kind of drop and foam that lived in my imagination - an essentially cinematic interpretation of a natural wonder.

CASA: After all of these years as an artist, what keeps you painting and working at the creative process? or Why do you paint?

Goldyne: I have drawn and painted since I was a few years old. It is the thing I always most loved doing. Even when I am not getting 'close' to what I desire, I sometimes reflect at the moment of greatest frustration that "just doing this" is so incredibly enjoyable. Exploring can be its own reward, even when you come up empty-handed.

CASA: What is the largest waterfall painting that you've completed? Is size an important element in this series for you?

Goldyne: The series from which the exhibition at Sullivan Goss is drawn is, size-wise, the largest to date. They are 6 feet high by 18 inches wide. I have been known mostly for works of small size, what I prefer to call chamber

images. Indeed, I do many small "exercises" in ink and oil to prepare for the large waterfalls, and I value these for their own qualities, but standing before a work that is at least as tall as the average viewer gives particular immediacy to the impact of the image. The tall-thin shape echos what many a waterfall's shape is (attenuated and compressed) as the invented depiction itself references what a waterfall does--falls.

CASA: It seems that entire worlds appear to define the top and bottom of the vertical space... was this part of each painting particularly fun?

Goldyne: Yes. What I call the "painting part" of these pictures takes place at top and bottom and is what I most look forward to. However, before you can 'take in' those passages or before you may even want to, you will have to have been drawn in by some

relatively sub-conscious appeal. I believe that appeal is embodied in the geometry and the contrast established by the format and the juxtapositions of the larger forms and color glazes.

CASA: What role does the natural world play in your day-to-day life? How does it impact your work?

Goldyne: Landscape has always been the subject toward which I have gravitated in older art, and we live in the countryside overlooking a verdant valley. We chose it after living in the city for more than 30 years. I awaken listening to birds and leaves rustling; no waterfalls in the immediate vicinity though.

CASA: How did you choose the color palette... and your medium of India ink & oil glaze?

Goldyne: Many artists are inspired in their graphic art by their painting style. With me, it was the reverse. I love making prints, and I was attracted to eighteenth-century aquatints (tonal etchings printed in blacks and grays) of natural history subjects--birds, shells, landscapes. These would often be hand-colored by applying a wash of watercolor over the dark tonalities of the aquatint. Well, my paintings have their tonalities determined by an ink wash laid on first. So, you could say that these canvases are in part inspired by a more traditional print aesthetic. They are also indebted to my deep regard for Japanese 'Shijo' Scroll painting as well my affection for both European and American landscape oil studies. I guess the ingredients are unexpectedly diverse, but hopefully the recipe has been refined over the years and can be pegged as my own.

Sullivan Goss is located at 7 E Anapamu St and is open daily 10-5:30. Reach them at 730-1460.



Waterfall VIII, 2010, 72"x18", Mixed Media on Linen by Joseph Goldyne



Waterfall XIV, 2010, 72"x18", Mixed Media on Linen by Joseph Goldyne



Joseph Goldyne

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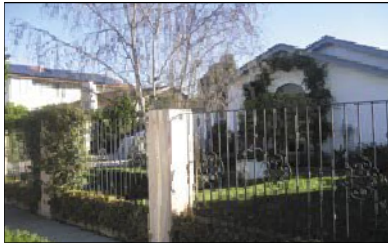
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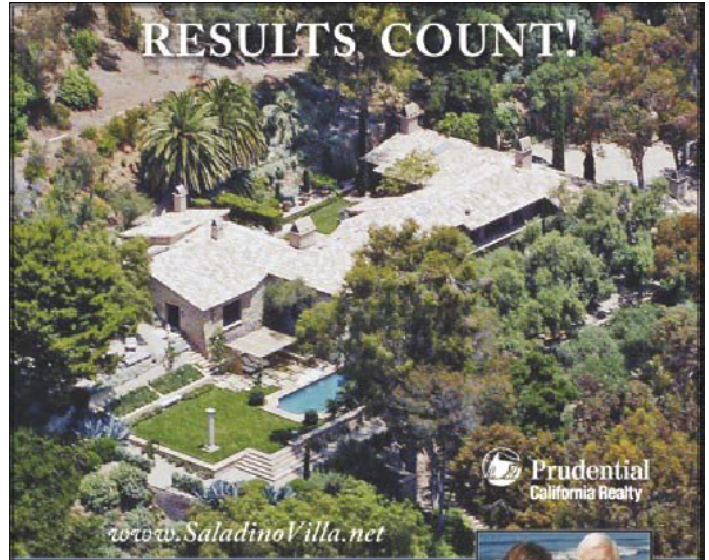
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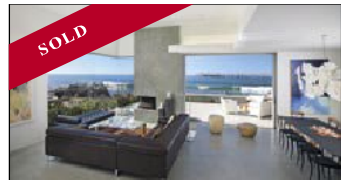


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