

Art for Art's Sake

Leon Dabo opens at Sullivan Goss in Santa Barbara, California

Through December 28

**Sullivan Goss,
An American Gallery**
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To inaugurate the fall art season, Sullivan Goss, An American Gallery will present an exhibition of paintings, drawings and pastels from the estate of French-born American artist Leon Dabo (1864-1960).

With 18 works created between 1885 and 1954, the exhibition seeks to discover the threads that tether his three principal periods and his three main mediums together. Accordingly, works from his early tonalist period will be intermixed with his later floral series and his final Provençal work.

Dabo was a phenomenally productive and successful artist whose career spanned the 19th and 20th centuries—an epoch of momentous change in the world of art. In turn, Dabo was unusually urbane, seeing much that he admired in the wispy aestheticism of James Abbott McNeill Whistler, the moodiness of American tonalism, the dreamy symbolism of Rêdon, the calligraphic virtuosity of Chinese painting, and the bold brushwork and vivid colors of Cézanne and Matisse. In a body of work covering some 70 years, he assimilated them all, creating a cosmopolitan vision marked by its



Leon Dabo (1864-1960), *Vase Blanc Avec Fleurs*, late 1930s. Oil on canvas, 36 x 27 in.



Leon Dabo (1864-1960), *The Moon on the Lake aka Moon Rising*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 25 x 20 in.



preference for fineness in line, form, color and emotion—qualities that moved with and against the trajectories of modern art as the 20th century wore on.

"Art for Art's Sake" is often cited as the rallying cry of the aesthetic movement with which Whistler and Oscar Wilde were associated. It sought beauty at the expense of all else, even morality. For Dabo, it seems that the search for beauty was itself a moral and ennobling enterprise.

Sullivan Goss has represented the artist for almost three years and has published three books related to specific bodies of work. Generally, these books have sought to clarify and even simplify the story of Dabo's artistic development—to divide his work into digestible chunks. *Art for Art's Sake* looks for the commonality in his "different styles" and mediums to embrace the complexity of his output. Thus, for example, the vertical spray of an autumn tree in *Lavish Fall Light*, circa 1900, seems perfectly at home next to the vertical arrangement of blossoms in *Vase Blanc* from 1937. The many other connections uniting Dabo's works are left to the viewer to find. ■

Leon Dabo (1864-1960), *Untitled Two Ballooning Trees in French Landscape*, ca. 1952. Oil on canvas, 27 x 36 in.