

Making Waves

A new monograph celebrates the
art of HANK PITCHER

WRITTEN BY L.D. PORTER





Looking East, Los Baños del Mar, 2009, oil on canvas over board, 24 x 36 in.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *The artist painting Pink Drinks at Montecito's Coral Casino; Yater Surftech, 2006, oil on canvas over board, 96 x 48 in.; Pink Drinks, 1993, oil on canvas over board, 36 x 72 in.*

For nearly five decades, Hank Pitcher has painted what he knows best: Santa Barbara and the people who inhabit it. Now his gallery of 20 years, Sullivan Goss—An American Gallery, has produced an impressive monograph (*Hank Pitcher*, available at Upstairs at Pierre LaFond) packed with vibrant images accompanied by thoughtful essays penned by scholars, colleagues, and friends. It's a well-deserved paean to the artist's oeuvre.

Arriving in Santa Barbara in 1951 at the age of 2, Pitcher grew up in Isla Vista (he was a star fullback at San Marcos High School) and studied art and literature at U.C. Santa Barbara's newly minted College of Creative Studies (he's been a core faculty member there since 1971). Fully embracing the California lifestyle, Pitcher became an avid surfer and created the infamous—and

still extant—logo for Mr. Zogs surfboard Sex Wax brand. Only love could convince him to leave Santa Barbara, and it did, in 1980, when he moved to New York City to follow his soon-to-be wife, Susan, a fashion trendsetter. They returned to California a year later, bringing memories of the Mudd Club, punk music, and the thriving art world scene.

As an artist, Pitcher has always been true to his vision. Resisting art world trends, his paintings are straightforward and devoid of irony or sentimentality; from his totemic surfboard portraits, sweeping Gaviota Coast landscapes, surfers captured at the shore, to his stately serene nudes—Pitcher distills his subject matter to its essence and makes every brushstroke count. It's a fearless approach, and the work's lack of pretension belies the masterful technique required to produce it. •



TOP TO BOTTOM: *Umbrella and King Palms Over Miramar Cove*, 2007-8, oil on canvas over board, 35 x 114 in.; *Miramar Beach*, 1987, oil on canvas over board, 34 x 68 in.; *East Beach*, 1998, oil on canvas, 18 x 48 in. OPPOSITE: *Roy at Coal Oil Point*, 1986, oil on canvas, 84 x 72 in.



North Point 1, 2018,
oil on canvas over
board, 48 x 68 in.



North Point 3, 2018, oil on canvas over board, 48 x 68 in. OPPOSITE: A Woman Holding a Shell, 1987, oil on canvas, 84 x 68 in.



“I like painting portraits, though it can be challenging. It is relatively easy to paint someone from a photo, but being with a live person for long periods of time staring at their face has risks.” HANK PITCHER



“For over 30 years Michael Drury and I have gone to Point Conception to paint on the shortest day of the year.”

HANK PITCHER



TOP TO BOTTOM: Pitcher's logo design for Mr. Zogs surfboard wax; the artist with his giant *Butterfly Beach* painting (c. 1993). OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM: The artist painting at Point Conception (c. 1980) photographed by Tom de Walt; Pitcher with his students at the U.C. Santa Barbara's College of Creative Studies.

