



Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUSAN McDONNELL: CURIUSER AND CURIUSER!

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SANTA BARBARA, CA - “Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice after falling down the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll’s famous Victorian novel, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. **For her debut solo exhibition at Sullivan Goss**, Pasadena-based artist **Susan McDonnell** presents a suite of eleven exquisitely rendered egg tempera paintings that deal in wonder, whimsy, microcosm, and eccentricity in the natural world. Ironically, McDonnell’s first painting exhibited with the gallery was an indirect quotation, *Alice and the Wonder Tree*.

The allusion to Victorian botanical illustration is inescapable without being definitive. Botany was considered one of the few sciences genteel enough for Victorian ladies to pursue. It was thought to cultivate feminine virtues and to promote gender-appropriate skills like gardening and decorating. McDonnell’s own attitude towards this history seems ambiguous at best. Her paintings all seem to have an edge – both a theatricality and a reverence for oddity that don’t conform to traditional notions of gentility. She also seems to imbue the decorative quality of her work with a sense of irony or defiance. By painting the rare and the bizarre in a traditionally decorative form and style, she subtly subverts the tradition.

Painting natural curiosities in an Old World medium like egg tempera nevertheless suggests a certain admiration for the original form. Curiouser and curiouser, indeed. According to the artist, she likes tempera for the way that colors weave together like the threads in a woven cloth to create a unified field. She also likes the durability of the colors and the archival nature of the medium.

Her larger paintings, meanwhile, are landscapes of the imagination. They extend the idea of worlds within worlds that one sees in the small stage-lit still lifes.

Susan McDonnell received both her Bachelor of Fine Arts and her Masters of Fine Arts from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. She currently teaches at Mount Saint Mary’s College in Los Angeles. She has shown extensively in Los Angeles and Santa Fe. This will be her first solo exhibition in Santa Barbara.

Come to the opening. Visit, explore, collect! 1st Thursday, June 5th from 5 - 8pm.

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