

Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE RED-HEADED STEPCCHILD

THE HISTORY OF COLLAGE & ASSEMBLAGE IN SANTA BARBARA: 1956-2018

SEPTEMBER 20th – OCTOBER 14, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION: 1ST THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4 | 5 - 8pm

SANTA BARBARA, CA - As part of the gallery's ongoing commitment to showcase and document the best of Santa Barbara's historical and contemporary art scene, Sullivan Goss is proud to present *The Red-Headed Stepchild: The History of Collage & Assemblage in Santa Barbara: 1955-2018*. Santa Barbara's engagement with collage as a fine art form dates back to the mid 1950s when William Dole (1910-1985) began to make the delicate paper collages that eventually brought him international acclaim. The city's first assemblage artist, meanwhile, was almost certainly John Bernhardt (1921-1963), who arrived and began making assemblages in 1959.

Collage and assemblage as fine art processes have roots in Synthetic Cubism (1912-1914) and in the Dada readymades of Marcel Duchamp (c. 1913), but with a limited number of exceptions (some major, like Joseph Cornell (1903-1972)), the processes were largely sidelined until the mid 1950s when artists like Gordon Wagner (1915-1987), Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), and Edward Kienholz (1927-1994) took them back up again. Santa Barbara's first assemblage artist, John Bernhardt, took up the art form without the knowledge of any of these other artists' works.

Building a home for himself and his family in the beatnik "Mountain Drive" community, Bernhardt's junkyard scavenging trips lead to the development of a new body of work, but it was a short lived practice. He died in 1963 at age 42. The next year, Thomas Leavitt presided over the organization of a retrospective for Bernhardt at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and a masterwork was taken into the museum's permanent collection. (Today, his work is rare as much of it was destroyed in the Tea Fire.)

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For images or other information requests, contact Nathan Vonk at 805.730.1460 or nathan@sullivangoss.com

In successive waves, a tradition took hold. Aage Pedersen (1920-2011) – who showed with Bernhardt at the now forgotten Gallery 8 on Anapamu Street – made assemblages that were as bold as any made in L.A. during the same period. Ken Nack (1923-2009) was already an international artist with a major national museum exhibition history when he began teaching at S.B.C.C. in 1963. Ron Robertson followed close on their heels, having already studied at Black Mountain College alongside Cy Twombly (1928-2011) and Robert Rauschenberg when he arrived in 1967. (Robertson is the last living grandfather of the local scene at age 91!) Ron went on to teach virtually everywhere in Santa Barbara.

Local legend and Westmont Professor Emeritus Tony Askew followed close behind, learning his craft from William Rohrbach at U.C.S.B. (His major retrospective at the Westmont Ridley Tree Museum of Art is open now.) Mary Heebner studied with William Dole and later taught alongside him. Dug Uyesaka took her class before going on to teach himself. (Uyesaka currently has a show at the Santa Barbara Architectural Foundation.)

In 1986, the Contemporary Arts Forum and UCSB's College of Creative Studies co-hosted *Southern California Assemblage: Past and Present*. (It was curated by Elena Mary Siff, who is also in this exhibition.) They also presented a major Reddin-Kienholz exhibition called *The Art Show* in that same year. In 1990, Art from Scrap started up with the mission of promoting assemblage in environmentalist terms. (Reuse is recycling, after all.) In other words, important institutions both took notice and were created to harness the local tradition.

The story is long, important, and rich with telling details. And yet. And yet, it is a story largely untold. Collage and assemblage certainly don't enjoy the notoriety that plein air painting does. It is on that basis that artist Sue Van Horsen came up with the title *The Red-Headed Stepchild*. She and curator Jeremy Tessmer were musing over drinks on Tessmer's notion that assemblage artists get invited to every family gathering in the Santa Barbara art world, but always seem relegated to the kids' table. "Yeah, we're like the red-headed stepchild," she said.

This exhibition sets out to correct the record. It presents a long tradition with plenty of historical works, but it also tracks current practice. Artists in this exhibition include: TONY ASKEW • TAL AVITZUR • JOHN BERNHARDT • WILLIAM DOLE • NANCY GIFFORD • MARY HEEBNER • INGA GUZYTE • FRANK KIRK • PHILIP KOPLIN • DAN LEVIN • MICHAEL LONG • VIRGINIA McCracken • KEN NACK • RON ROBERTSON • JOE SHEA • SUSAN TIBBLES • SUE VAN HORSEN • HOWARD WARSHAW

Curator Jeremy Tessmer has produced a special hardcover book for the exhibition that outlines the general history of collage and assemblage in Santa Barbara and is lavishly illustrated.

Come to the opening. Explore, acquire, network, and celebrate!

1st Thursday, October 4th from 5 - 8pm.

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