

# Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## AHEAD IN THE CLOUDS

DECEMBER 20, 2018 - FEBRUARY 17, 2019

OPENING RECEPTION:

1<sup>ST</sup> THURSDAY, JANUARY 3<sup>RD</sup> | 5 - 8pm

**SANTA BARBARA, CA** - Is there anything more mutable than the clouds in the sky? The boundless play of shape, color, and transparency make cloud-gazing an endlessly engaging activity; so much so, in fact, that

lying on the ground and staring at the clouds is a generally conjured image for wonder itself. Indeed, Heaven itself is popularly conceptualized as “in the clouds.” Linguistically, the limitless forms that these vaporous, floating islands take suggest wonder or imagination, deep thought, and the unknown. Many expressions flow from the many connotations: “The future is cloudy.” “Our data is ‘in the cloud.’” “Her head is in the clouds.” “A cloud follows him wherever he goes.” “She just floats above it all.”

Art historically, clouds became increasingly important forms with the rise of Romantic painting in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Perhaps no two painters better epitomize this trend than the British artists **J.M.W. Turner** (1775-1851) and **John Constable** (1776-1837). Working concurrently to express the strong emotions stirred up by dramatic atmospheric effects, Constable and Turner were nevertheless very different in style. (Constable was also heavily inspired by a pioneer of meteorology named Luke Howard who coined the nomenclature of clouds.) In turn, the work of these two artists produced two distinct lineages. From Constable grew the Barbizon School in France with its emphasis on moodiness and the romance of the agrarian life, which lead to the development of Impressionism. Turner’s glazes, ambiguous forms, and luminous “effects” led to ever bolder abstractions and an increased interest in transitory light.

Turner’s principal American acolyte was **Thomas Moran** (1837-1926). Sullivan Goss is very pleased to be able to **announce the exhibition of a spectacular painting by Moran called *Sunset from 1922***. Featuring a mythical Western landscape being traversed by figures that recall a five-hundred plus year tradition of depicting the Holy Family’s “Flight into Egypt,” *Sunset* implies a Divine Providence at work in America’s westward expansion. Moran lived in Santa Barbara at the end of his life and likely made this painting here, which makes its return to our city particularly noteworthy.

From the Constable tradition, we have **Lockwood de Forest (1850-1932)** – one of the most devoted sky

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worshippers in American art history. Working to get “the effects” and to record his most transitory impressions of nature directly, de Forest’s paintings in the exhibition span his earliest trip to the Holy Land in 1876 to nocturnes he made between 1901 and 1910.

Through Turner – and by way of James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) – arrived **Leon Dabo** (1864-1960). Dabo was something of a cloud specialist, too. Indeed, the Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a painting by Dabo called simply *The Cloud*. A 1937 floral still life floating in clouds called *Vase Blanc* demonstrates that his love of painting clouds was lifelong.

Many of the gallery’s most cherished artists are either specialists in the painting of clouds – like **Phoebe Brunner** and **Nicole Strasburg** – or else are such gifted painters of the landscape that their clouds are just another sharp arrow in the quiver. Among this second group can be counted **Meredith Brooks Abbott, Patricia Chidlaw, Hank Pitcher, and Ray Strong**.

Outside cloud specialists have been imported, too. **Hilary Brace**, an artist who used these nebulous forms as a structure for abstraction, is being represented by a magnificent tapestry as well as drawings. Celebrated photographer **Bill Dewey** will contribute photography of the atmosphere taken from above in his plane. **John Ng** will offer a similar take in paint.

Rounding out the exhibition are sculptures by **James Haggerty**, whose “cloud glaze” formulation fits right in and **Sidney Gordin** (1918-1996) whose direct metal sculptures of the late 1950s and early 1960s involved an intuitive assembly of blobby shapes welded together in the spirit of wonder and play.

**ARTISTS INCLUDED:**

MEREDITH BROOKS ABBOTT • HILARY BRACE • PHOEBE BRUNNER • PATRICIA CHIDLAW • COLIN CAMPBELL COOPER • LEON DABO • LOCKWOOD DE FOREST • BILL DEWEY • SIDNEY GORDIN • JAMES HAGGERTY • ANNA HILLS • THOMAS MORAN • JOHN NG • HANK PITCHER • NICOLE STRASBURG • RAY STRONG

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

**1<sup>ST</sup> Thursday, January 3<sup>RD</sup> from 5 - 8pm.**