

Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

11 EAST ANAPAMU STREET
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 18, 2021



FORMALIZE

STRATEGIES FOR ABSTRACTION

APRIL 29 - JULY 3, 2022

OPENING RECEPTION:

1ST THURSDAY, MAY 5TH | FROM 5-8pm

MERITAGE WINE MARKET will be on site to pour selected wines for the reception. They are located at 18 West Anapamu Street, just down the way from the Gallery.

SANTA BARBARA, CA - Sullivan Goss is excited to announce a **new exhibition of abstract art** dating from the mid-century to today and covering Modernism, Postmodernism, and whatever we will be calling the present moment. From French artist Maurice Denis, we get the following quote, “Remember, that a picture, before it is a picture of a battle horse, a nude woman, or some story, is essentially a flat surface covered in colors arranged in a certain order.” From there, it is a hop, skip, and a jump to looking at all pictures primarily in terms of form – that is: line, shape, color, composition, texture, and materiality. Criticism that looks at art this way is called **Formalist**. To see the world that way, **you need to develop formal eyes**. For more than half of the twentieth century, it was this body of theory that produced one new idea of abstraction after another.

On the other hand, the art in this exhibition is not intended to be understood purely in formal terms. There are no horses here, but might there be a few nudes? There is certainly landscape – an animating concern of American art from the beginning and a cherished theme for local collectors. The most “literal” landscape is *Point Lobos Sunshine* by **JULIKA LACKNER**, but *Black Triangle* by **WERNER DREWES** could certainly refer to Black Mountain College in North Carolina where his work was often shown with other members of the Société Anonyme collective. *Rural Route* by **JULES ENGEL** doesn’t stray too far outside that line, whereas **OSKAR FISCHINGER’s** *Untitled Abstraction No. 185* does begin to float away. In that great beyond, one finds a **KARL BENJAMIN** painting with a passing reference to the rock canyon walls that became iconic in landscape paintings of the American West, but which can also be seen as pure geometric abstraction. The landscape reference reaches its outer limits in the imaginary worlds of **JANE CALLISTER**, where the faintest intimations of landscape forms and space mingle with digital aesthetics and contemporary gestural painting to produce one of *the coolest* visions of the new millennium. Jane’s paintings are joined in that realm

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by those of **MARIA RENDÓN**, whose painting process mimics how the landscape is shaped by water with selective interventions by the artist. Forms are created and allowed to emerge.

There is also absence of form, which is to say *space itself*. **JOHN McCracken**, who once taught at UCSB before cementing his reputation as one of the most famous Minimalist artists of California is represented here by a painting titled simply *Space*. Evidently, he sought the absolute absence of form. Such trickery continues in the ideas and phenomena that we call the California Light & Space movement which can be seen here in the subtle and sophisticated work of **PHILLIP K. SMITH III**. His new intimately scaled work in aluminum has to be experienced more than seen.

Nearby, one finds collage approaches in both wood and paper by **SIDNEY GORDIN** and **WILLIAM DOLE**. The “**grid**” looms large for both – a compositional approach that seeks to divide the rectangle or square format of wall-hanging art into a grid so that large shapes and small shapes, negative space and positive space are all in balance. The grid literally rises up and asserts itself in a mid 90s sculpture by **KEN BORTOLAZZO**.

The fragments of that collage aesthetic begin to detach and defy gravity in the brand new and beautifully-colored origami series of abstractions by UCSB’s own **YUMIKO GLOVER**.

The idea of divorcing shapes from their usual context lies at the heart of Formalism. It’s an idea that’s easy to grasp in the crisply delineated swimming pool shapes that are painted on deconstructed and reclaimed wire spool box tops by L.A. artist **TANNER GOLDBECK**, once of Santa Barbara. That same idea lurks in the work of **J. BRADLEY GREER**, whose untitled paintings show repeating shapes in various colors, laid up in thick, careful strokes.

The exhibition sounds its last note with the gorgeous colors, sparse compositions, and intuitive shapes of **DOROTHY FRATT**, who was once a member of the Washington Color School.

This is the gallery’s first project with JANE CALLISTER, TANNER GOLDBECK, J. BRADLEY GREER, and PHILLIP K. SMITH III.

ARTISTS INCLUDED:

KEN BORTOLAZZO | KARL BENJAMIN | JANE CALLISTER | WILLIAM DOLE | JULES ENGEL | OSKAR FISCHINGER | DOROTHY FRATT | YUMIKO GLOVER | TANNER GOLDBECK | SIDNEY GORDIN | J. BRADLEY GREER | JULIKA LACKNER | JOHN McCracken | MARIA RENDÓN | PHILLIP K. SMITH III

Image:

OSKAR FISCHINGER (1900-1967)

Untitled Abstraction No. 185, 1956

28 x 22 inches | Oil on canvas

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