

Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

11 EAST ANAPAMU STREET
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 20, 2025

Irresistible

FLOWERS & THEIR ADMIRERS

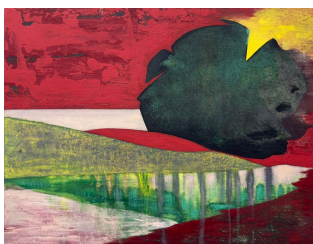
OCTOBER 31 - DECEMBER 28, 2025

OPENING RECEPTION:

1ST THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH | FROM 5-8 pm



SANTA BARBARA, CA - A number of years ago, a well-respected artist walked into the Sullivan Goss gallery and, on seeing a traditional floral painting, asked curator Jeremy Tessmer, “People don’t really still *buy* flower paintings, do they?” The question seemed to imply that it was old-fashioned, a cliché. Maybe. But at an art fair this year, a gallery showed a group of six good-sized prints of polaroids taken of tulips that Jeremy fell for on sight. The artist was Cy Twombly, the enigmatic midcentury painter whose abstractions fetch tens of millions at auction. If Twombly couldn’t resist the beauty of flowers, who could?



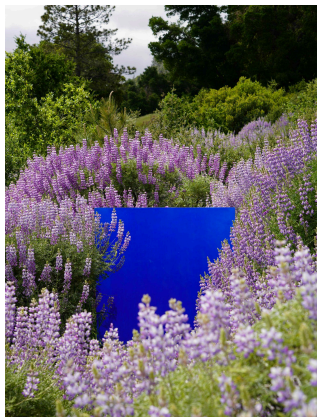
Flowers have been on Earth for over 120 million years. Their goal: to seduce would-be pollinators. Their strategy: radiance, both literal and figurative. Plus color and scent. Their shapes can be delicate and seductive, which makes them an exciting challenge for artists to draw. They can also have bold simple shapes in vivid colors, which gives them a strong graphic appeal. Meanwhile, their transcendent allure has induced human beings across cultures to make them part of a variety of cultural rituals. We give them as romantic gestures in courtship and as friendly ones at dinner parties. We bring them to weddings and to funerals. As symbols, they are quite open.

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For images or other information requests, contact Jeremy Tessmer at 805.730.1460 or jeremy@sullivangoss.com



The artists in this exhibition respond to the flower's charms in a variety of ways. Some, like **Susan McDonnell**, found inspiration in the long tradition of floral still life painting, even botanical illustration. They suggested the curator should look at *The Temptations of Flora*, *Jan Van Jysum 1682-1749* - an unexpectedly old reference for artists interested in pushing contemporary painting forward. **Joseph Goldyne**, the celebrated painter and printmaker, nods to the Dutch tradition with his *Hide and Seek*, an image of a tulip from the Dutch tulip craze of the seventeenth century. A number of others, including **John Nava**, **Hank Pitcher**, **Dan McCleary**, **Maria Rendón**, and **John Millei** cited Impressionist Edouard Manet's "deathbed bouquets" shown at a Getty Museum exhibition in late 2019. They were moved by the immediacy of the paint and the profundity of a dying artist, wracked by pain, seeking to convey a small moment of beauty - the flowers in small glass vases brought by friends. Millei's work in this exhibition, however, also draws in references to Cézanne's c. 1898 *The Three Skulls*, mixing it together with his own formalized language for florals to create a sly *memento mori* - a reminder of our mortality that John conveys more with a wink than a scowl.



Others seem more tantalized by the blooms as shapes. Among those, ceramic sculptors **Yassi Mazandi** and **James Haggerty** join **Minga Opazo** in textile and **Ken Bortolazzo** in stainless steel in riffing on both stems and symmetry, circles and organic contours. In this endeavor, they are joined by **Ellsworth Kelly** - an artist whose floral drawings show his pronounced interest in form. **J. Bradley Greer** joins him in the reductive impulse. Floral shapes likewise impressed California modernist photographer **Brett Weston**, whose silver gelatin print of Hawaiian flowers reads as an abstraction from across the room.



Blakeney Sanford's photographs from her *Portal Series* are more conceptual, but no less beautiful. The challenge of the exhibition is to make sure that everyone finds something that they find *irresistible*. There are drawings, photographs, sculptures, prints, and paintings. The public is invited to come see for themselves if anyone actually *buys* flower paintings. The Gallery is making a large bet that they do.

ARTISTS INCLUDED:

Ken Bortolazzo | Leon Dabo (1864-1960) | Joseph Goldyne | Bradley Greer | James Haggerty | Ellsworth Kelly (1923-2015) | Harvey Leepa (1887-1977) | Yassi Mazandi | Dan McCleary | Susan McDonnell | John Millei | John Nava | Minga Opazo | Hank Pitcher | Maria Rendón | Blakeney Sanford | Jean Swiggett (1910-1990) | Brett Weston (1911-1993)

IMAGES (from top to bottom): JOHN NAVA *Callas*, 2025 | 41 x 25 inches | oil on canvas over panel • MARIA RENDÓN *Black Rose*, 2025 | 10.5 x 14 inches | acrylic, flashe, and water on panel • J. BRADLEY GREER *Silverlaking*, 2025 | 20 x 16 inches | oil on panel • YASSI MAZANDI *Flower 2*, 2023 | 26.5 x 9.5 x 7.5 inches | English porcelain (unique flower), powder coated steel (support), and lost wax cast bronze (unique stand) • BLAKENEY SANFORD *The Portals - Wilhoit Mill, 05-28-23, Mono County, CA* | 10 x 7.5 inches | photograph (ed. of 30) • HARVEY LEEPA (1887-1977) *Untitled 20*, c. 1962 | 12.625 x 14.75 inches | watercolor on paper