

# On the Wall, Off the Wall

SANTA BARBARA-BRED ARTIST DAVID FLORES PULLS TOGETHER THE DIVERSITY OF HIS PASSION FOR A FASCINATING EXHIBITION AT SULLIVAN GOSS

By Josef Woodard,  
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## David Flores at Sullivan Goss

When: through September 3

Where: Sullivan Goss, 7 E. Anapamu St.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily

Information: 730-1460,  
sullivangoss.com

Many one-person art shows are elaborate affairs, long in the planning and the making-of. Not so the fascinating current David Flores exhibition seizing Sullivan Goss, which came together in a spontaneous, fast-track burst of creative energy befitting the artist. Mr. Flores started out in Santa Barbara and in recent years has gone on to work with Matt (“The Simpsons”) Groening, infamous street artist Shepard Fairey and exert his muralist talents with an epic 300-foot mural for the L.A. Coliseum.

The current local show began, so the story goes, with the artist



David Flores' show at Sullivan Goss.

gazing longingly at a ripe “canvas” at an art opening, imagining what he could do with it. Said “canvas” was the long wall in the main

gallery. Mentioning his desire to turn his muralist sites on the vast white expanse, Sullivan Goss curator Jeremy Tessmer agreed to not only have him leave his mark there, but to create a show around it in a fast-approaching month-long window on the gallery calendar.

Fast forward to one of the more intriguing exhibitions of the year in Santa Barbara, dubbed, with a deceptively simplicity, “David Flores at Sullivan Goss.” Added to the long wall centerpiece — a massive expansion of his painting “Downtown ’81,” also in the show, and as a recurring leitmotif in the space — are multi-media works. These are loosely but also neatly organized into modular red, green and blue-themed aggregates of smaller pieces, a handwoven rug homage to Salvador Dali, and iconic portraits of such other heroes as Pancho Villa and Kendrick Lamar (of the masterpiece album “To Pimp a Butterfly” fame), flanking the entryway to the tamer climes of milder fare in the back gallery.

In all, the Flores show manages to function as both a collection of singular works and a cohesive installation meta-work. Although

impressive artist is all about, at this moment in his young art worldly trajectory.

Working fast and with a critical balance of impulsive intuition, edgy assertions and a natural sense of formality and visual poise is key to Mr. Flores’ artistic being. Strongly influenced by the graffiti cultural imprint of the late “street modernists” Basquiat (the spray paint can-wielding subject of “Downtown ’81,” created with paint, spray paint, Sharpie and more) and Keith Haring, the Santa Barbara-bred artist has an uncanny knack for transcending the already loosening and liquefying boundaries between art of the “street” and the gallery space.

Another of the important pieces in his current show extends the medium factor into a surprising niche, with a tall stained-glass self-portrait of the artist, set into a dramatic light box structure on one narrow wall space. Any suggestion of a chapel-like self-deification here is purely semi-ironic, but the reflexive hint of a nod to the Catholic Church becomes part of a complex matrix of allusions in the show.

In effect, the show itself is a self-portrait by way of indexing and paying personal artistic respects to a range of heroes and influences from culture and beyond. We come across heroic tributes to droll post-modernist artist Jeff Koons, dissident Chinese conceptualist Ai Wei Wei, and even the Mohawk-coiffed Travis Bickle — Robert DeNiro’s disturbed urban vigilante character in Martin Scorsese’s classic film “Taxi Driver.” Louis Armstrong and Sammy Davis Jr. are also a mix also speckled with square abstract aluminum panels.

It’s a mix at once densely busy and carefully-organized into a bodacious visual, culture-referential groove. It is “David Flores at Sullivan Goss.” Check this one out, but act fast: the show comes down on September 3. By the rules of artistic engagement, that closure includes the official painting over of his inherently ephemeral mural, the very seed of the show before us. Life comes and flows and goes. Ditto, art.

Courtesy photos



Self-portrait

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