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ADVICE

## Sullivan Goss to Feature Three Nostalgic Artists in 'American Details'



A painting by Robert Townsend. (Robert Townsend photo)

By Nathan Vonk for Sullivan Goss | September 15, 2015 | 2:00 p.m.

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Sullivan Goss is excited to announce an exhibition of meticulous pop realist paintings and prints by three of L.A.'s hottest young artists in the field: Robert Townsend, Dave Lefner and Mary-Austin Klein.

Each artist works to achieve a startling realism in their own stubbornly difficult medium. Indeed, they are united by both their reverence for the mastery of lost technique as well as their interest in the way that the icons of America's bygone consumer culture have achieved a kind of mythic status in the world's imagination.

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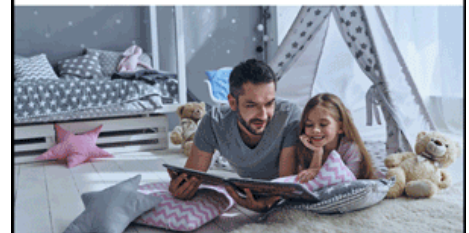
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Googie neon signs, AM/FM radios, matchbooks, motels, freeways and cars that now carry the prefix "classic" are not presented ironically, but reverently.

The craftsmanship of Townsend's watercolors, Lefner's reduction linocuts and Klein's finely resolved oils on Dura-Lar speaks to both their obsession and adoration for vintage Americana. Their works are too laborious — they smack of love.

Robert Townsend is both a collector and artist of the ephemera and design objects of the 1930s, '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s. From antique shops to eBay, he scours the world for resonant icons with the right patina.

Perfect condition is not so desirable. The textures and discolorations that signal the use and age of once utopian products both fascinate him as a collector and challenge him as an artist.

These he renders larger than life in the notoriously tricky medium watercolor and in oil. Since his solo exhibition with Sullivan Goss in 2009, he has exhibited across the country at galleries, museums and in art fairs.

Townsend's work has become part of the Frederick R. Weisman and Getty collections.

Dave Lefner is one of the finest linocut printers working today. His bold reduction linocuts in as many as eleven colors are created in tiny editions of fairly large prints.

Each color involves more chiseling and carving from the original piece of linoleum. The risk of one misplaced gouge grows with each new color applied, but collectors will know that the edition can never be "reopened."

His preferred subject is the googie neon sign, but anything vintage that gleams or glows is fair game. These signs still announce where to stay, what to eat, what to do and how to get there.

A black Lincoln Continental is still quite stylish, and donuts at the Stardust Motel followed by a splash in the motel pool — all are depicted in the graphic detail.

Mary-Austin Klein paints life on the road. Devout California road trippers may well recognize the topography along the anonymous stretches of blacktop that criss-cross the Golden State.

The orange cones and tell tale green freeway signs are the lodestones by which we travel in this Western paradise. Klein paints these in oil on a slick, archival plastic surface called Dura-Lar.

Wouldn't canvas be easier? Wouldn't letting some of the passages remain a little more brushy be easier too? Perhaps. But that isn't her.

Like Lefner and Townsend, she is not one to ignore the details, either in the way that she works or in the subjects that she chooses.

Come to the opening Thursday, Oct. 1, from 5–8 p.m. to visit, explore and collect.

— *Nathan Vonk represents Sullivan Goss.*



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