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Hank Pitcher Book

Sullivan Goss Publishes Pitcher Retrospective

By Charles Donelan

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With such clarity and positivity in short supply, this new volume devoted to the paintings of Hank Pitcher comes as a much-appreciated balm to the spirit. Paging through its 254 richly colorful pages allows one to fathom the range and intensity of Pitcher's output over a career that stretches without a break from his enrollment at UCSB's College of Creative Studies in 1967 to the present. Although he's probably best known for bringing images from surfing into the canon of fine art, this retrospective demonstrates how various his work has been over five decades, and how deeply rooted it is in the unique advantages offered by our region.



Hank Pitcher book cover

Multiple writers, including project organizer Jeremy Tessmer and art historian Jennifer Samet, have contributed thoughtful essays, and there's a useful chronology of Pitcher's charmed, Santa Barbara-centric life. Most delightful as complements to the dazzling full-color plates are the anecdotal remarks offered by the painter himself. Whether he's recounting the time that the opening of an exhibition of the bulls of Point Conception paintings was canceled due to the Rodney King uprising, or explaining how in order to finish "A Woman Holding Up the Sky" he had to subtract a volleyball from the composition, these deft interludes consistently convey the artist's warm and lively personality.

Throughout his career, Pitcher has modeled an ideal of lifelong learning. Myriad relationships with scientists and craftsmen, farmers and naturalists, many of them colleagues at UCSB, all drive the artist to use painting as a vehicle through which to understand the world. Whether

he's at the Sedgwick Preserve teaching painting alongside a paleontologist or examining the sandstone bricks of Arnoldi's Restaurant with a mason, Pitcher's curiosity about the history and ecology of everyday life animates his work with a glow of intelligence that matches his vibrant palette. Like his beloved surfing, painting gives Pitcher a way to put life back together, to heal for a moment the split in consciousness that divides humans from nature.

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