

JOE GOODE

b. 1937, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

1959-61 Chouinard Art Institute
Resides in Los Angeles, CA

"I am an abstract painter who uses 'common objects' —either real, painted, or referential — to put you in the painting." —1981

Like his childhood friend, Ed Ruscha, Joe Goode grew up in Oklahoma City before moving to L.A. in 1959 to attend Chouinard. Encouraged by his father, a portrait artist, he intended to become a commercial artist. Ruscha was a fellow classmate; Robert Irwin was one of his teachers.

In the early 1960s, on the heels of rejecting art school as uninspiring, Goode created thirteen lyrical milk bottle paintings, works which initially brought him to the attention of the art world.¹ Goode's work was labeled, along with Ruscha's, "California Pop" due to his use of common object imagery.

"My milk bottle paintings are usually described as Pop, but they're actually highly personal paintings. One night I came home after being in my studio all day. My wife and I had just had a baby so there were all those milk bottles lined upon our porch, and that image triggered those paintings. They had nothing to do with Pop theory. My work has always been of a personal nature. . . I've always considered myself an abstract painter."²

In the milk bottle series an actual painted (Alta-Dena) milk bottle is placed in front of a brushy, lush expanse of monochromatic canvas (e.g. NHAM's One Year Old, 1961, which consists of a muddy brown canvas with a flesh-colored bottle and a tan shadow; the painted milk bottle rests on the floor, casting a "shadow" on the color field behind.) There is a cool, conceptual play between the real bottle and its painted (or sometimes unpainted) "ghost" shadow on the canvas behind it. The domestic origin of these paintings evokes nostalgia and a full range of emotional responses. The series recalls Duchampian notions about commonplace objects as art and Jasper John's works (e.g., his ale cans), for both Goode and Johns mix elusive iconography with rich paint handling.

Concerns with everyday objects and their reception is evident in other early works in which the artist placed "humble" objects such as beds, staircases and windows in surrealistically vacuous environments. The objects were meticulously drawn or painted on ambiguous fields. In his 1963 series of house paintings the image was traced from photographic reproductions in the real estate section of newspapers and transferred to tactile fields of brushy paint. In November 13, 1963 (in the permanent collection) a small detailed drawing of a typical tract home is obliquely

surrounded by a flat expanse of black oil paint. It reveals the artist's ongoing concern with the relationship of actual and pictorial space.

Goode's "cloud triptychs" and "unmade bed" paintings extended this object orientation to encompass the entire painting. Images of the sky were encased in mullions and set behind Plexiglass making the ephemeral sky a concrete object seen from a concrete window. The "ghost image" reappears in these works in the form of twisted or torn drawings of unmade beds or Polaroids of the sky. In two series of staircases (1964 and 1971) the sculptures are aligned against walls or in corners in the manner of relief sculpture, too narrow and constricted to be walked on and physically experienced.

Goode's "Vandalism" series consisted of ripped layers of paper or canvas superimposed over layers of the same material in various colors; they were carefully inflicted rips and incisions meant to be pictorial elements, not Dadaist defacements. Another series, the "Shotgun" pieces, included canvases which were blasted with shotgun pellets. Goode was just trying to create layers of depth in these works rather than suggest violence, as some observers claimed .

Recent works (from 1989) , what Goode calls the "Water paintings," are a series of large cobalt blue canvases in which fields of spongy color suggest foliage, water reflections and dark azure skies.

Goode considers himself part of the world of art, influenced by other painters, but not a Surrealist , Formalist or Pop artist:"If you want to call my work anything, I guess it would be 'Oklahoma Realism.'"

¹The bottle paintings created a furor when they were first exhibited in a 1962 group show. The art world didn't know what to make of their synthesis of older styles (their all-over AE surface treatment and their look of color field painting) while embodying Pop and assemblage resistance to these older styles (the inclusion of a commonplace bottle).

²Kristine McKenna, "You're a Pop Artist -- The Museum Says So," L.A.Times, Calendar, April 23, 1989.

—Phyllis Kleinberg