

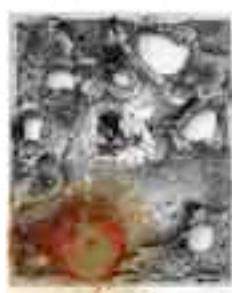
JOE GOODE

April 5 - May 24, 2008 at [DNJ Gallery](#), West Hollywood

by Nancy Kay Turner



Joe Goode, "Lost Painting, Fire," 2004-2007, acrylic on archival digital print, 71 x 60".



Black & White Photo with Paint (Milk Bottle)," oil on archival digital print, 13 1/2 x 11".



Black & White Photo with Paint (House)," oil on archival digital print, 13 1/2 x 11".

Joe Goode, a veteran Los Angeles painter generally associated with the advent of West Coast Pop Art, has always been something of a maverick. His body of work from 1962 to the present straddles both Pop and Conceptual art (with a hint of Surrealism), even though he has often used traditional drawing, painting and printmaking materials. Peter Plagen's iconic book on Southern California art "Sunshine Muse", describes Goode as "a philosopher" with an interest in "conceptualized illusion." And it is true, often Goode has as his subject matter natural phenomena such as clouds, skies, waterfalls and (prophetically) forest fires.

In 2004, Goode began a series that utilized his own digital photography. He photographed previous bodies of work, then he affixed the images to sound insulation board, painted on them with oils, and proceeded to burn away portions of the sound insulation. When mounted on stretcher bars, these ragged, irregular holes cast a shadow on the wall that allowed the white of the wall to become a part of the work. He hung the nearly 40 works in his studio, where, ironically and unfortunately, a fire destroyed them in May, 2005.

Goode's camera, left on the desk in the studio, was spared. He took haunting black and white pictures of the remains of the studio which are part of this exhibit. It is disturbing to see the 40 ghostly frames still on the wall, with no paintings on them (the large scale digital diptych photograph which documents this is a stunner). The scorched walls, peeling paint, damaged canvases and debris on the floor become eloquent eulogies of loss and lamentation. Documenting the devastation became the basis for the newest body of work.

Goode makes two versions of each untitled 11" X 14" digital photograph (from a destroyed piece)--one is left untouched in black and white and one is painted over with acrylic. Sometimes the nearly transparent paint seeps like a stain over the image, at other times, the orange and yellow abstract-expressionist blobs and streaks jump around like flames devouring the photograph. This body of work is like an infinity of mirrors. By using digital reproductions of earlier work and re-purposing them like clones, Goode runs the risk of the work losing much of its initial strength. Seeing the flat digital image just makes one pine for the original thickly encrusted oil painting with all its emphatic surface manipulation and real three dimensional holes. It's like margarine instead of butter.

There is also one large scale work in the show, which is constructed by printing out sections of the whole image (a dense forest) and gluing them down. Large globs of paint (faux abstract-expressionist, as they are built up with a transparent modeling paste and then painted over) cascade and sweep over the surface, transparent enough to see through to the picture but in stark contrast to it. By dint of sheer scale and painterly gesture this and the other large scale painted photographs command attention, and invite the audience for repeated viewing.

From the early sixties to the present, Goode has often created an elegant color field surface, only to mar it or to introduce random (though obviously premeditated) events, such as using fire or buckshot to alter the surface. In his "Torn Cloud Painting" series in the 1970's, he layered torn and ripped canvas over another flatter piece of canvas--again allowing the viewer to peer to another surface. These images, however, when photographed could pass as tromp l'oeil.

Ultimately, that is the problem. The most compelling works in the show are still the stark, dramatic and, yes, gorgeous black and white photographs of the burnt out studio. The small scale digital photographs of Goode's previous bodies of work (even with paint on them) are simply not magically transformed. This personal archeology of building the new on the scaffold of the old is a workable strategy, but not when there is merely reproduction instead of re-incarnation.

