

# LIFESTYLE

STYLE, ART, CULTURE, AND EVENTS OF THE SOUTH VALLEY

## THE PADEN HOME ROOM FOR A WINE EXPERT'S PASSION

CHARITY EVENT  
ONCE UPON A DREAM

CULINARY ARTS  
BACKYARD IMPROMPTU  
SURF AND TURF



For Goode,  
Bad Studio Fire

# Unlocks Seeds of Creative Potent

TEXT BY AARON COLLINS | PHOTOS COURTESY OF EDWARD DUARTE

**S**ome art achieves notoriety because it is incendiary. Famously, Andres Serrano's mystical-looking series of crucifixes and other religious imagery, photographed while suspended in urine or other substances, ignited a firestorm of controversy in the 1980s. And some art becomes notable because it is rather mistaken for being incendiary, as in the case of Chris Ofili's paintings of the Virgin Mary, affixed with elephant dung, which were nearly banned in the United States when then-New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani threatened to defund the Brooklyn Museum in the late '90s. Giuliani was apparently disinterested in learning the British artist's rather reverential reasons for making the paintings, which were rooted in his Nigerian Catholic heritage, in which elephant excrement is considered auspicious by some, and not a sacrilegious gesture.

Some art is just incendiary, period. As in flammable. Former Tulare County resident and noted California Pop impresario Joe Goode discovered the painful, literal truth of that fact when more than 40 of his works were destroyed in a studio fire in 2004. The doomed paintings were completed or mostly completed when disaster struck, apparently a total loss. But while they may have been destroyed as conceived, they were not a totally lost cause in the hands of a masterful artist at the height of his creative powers some five decades into his career among America's most prominent artists.

That he lived right here in Tulare County might come as a surprise to many who don't know his name. But such is the plight of an art world that runs on secret handshakes and esoterica, uncoupled from mainstream media culture in ways that European artists, for example, are not. Average Europeans are familiar with their own countries' notable artists, in whom they take considerable pride.





Goode, whose name populates a number of important 20th-century art history books, met misfortune of a degree that might have posed a total, devastating loss. Lesser mortals facing the same event might have considered it all a done deal, perhaps moving on to something else or giving up art altogether. But the conflagration met its match in this artist's eye, transformed into a phoenix-like process of reinvention, a reanimation of the dead, as it were.

When the smoke had cleared, Goode took his camera – one of the few tools spared in the fire – and began documenting the ruins. Charred with few remnants, the destruction was just the raw material for a new series currently featured in an exhibition called *Ashes*, through May at the Los Angeles gallery that represents Goode, DNJ Gallery.

Goode's photographs form the basis for new mixed-media artworks in which he places a black and white photo of the burnt art next to a second identical copy, over which he has painted something akin to what he intended for the originals, an act of defiance and control in the face of misfortune.

Goode has created elegies to lost time and treasure in his attempt to re-commission the destroyed artworks, a fitting gesture at age 70 when a major artist might be reflecting on what has been important, what might stand the test of time and the elements, and what might not. But more importantly, he has reminded us that we can triumph over a good deal more than we think – something that New Orleans artists are still struggling to overcome in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which wiped out the life's work of many artists there. Goode tells us that the only thing dead is what we leave for dead, so long as one has the faculties to bear in mind a living concept or willingness to stake out new territories and approaches in response to adversity. →

#### LEFT:

title: 2004mm 45 B&W Photo, Environmental Impact  
medium: archival digital print  
year: 2005; 11x13.5 inches

#### RIGHT:

title: 2004mm 45 B&W Photo with Paint, Environmental Impact  
medium: Oil, Archival Digital Print  
year: 2005; 11x13.5 inches





ABOVE: Noted abstract artist Joe Goode at work in his new studio. Goode lost more than 40 of his paintings when his studio burned, as well as those of other 20th century notables and friends of Goode's like Ed Ruscha, Larry Bell, Ken Price and Ed Moses — more than 100 works lost, in total.

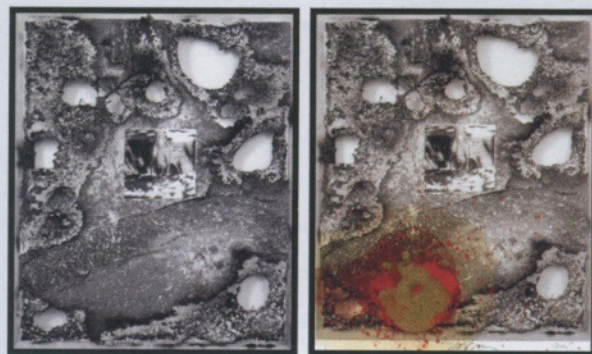


#### BELOW LEFT:

title: 2004mm 11 B&W Photo, Milk Bottle  
medium: Archival Digital Print  
year: 2004-2005; 11x13.5 inches

#### BELOW RIGHT:

title: 2004mm 11 B&W Photo with Paint, Milk Bottle  
medium: Oil, Archival Digital Print  
year: 2005; 11x13.5 inches



His latest concept also highlights the ways and reasons artists choose to represent their ideas. This work is reminiscent of the paintings created by famed German artist Gerhard Richter, who made a house of mirrors, as it were, by making a painting from a photograph, then a second photograph of the painting of the photo, and then another painting from the second photograph and so on. While Richter's work questions the worth of so many second-hand impulses and their role in the inherent disintegration of meaning in most art-making in general, Goode's burnt works comprise a similar conceptual echo chamber, but shed light on the role of accident and destruction in the chain of creation.

While Richter's approach questions the veracity, value and meaning of images when forced through so many illustrative processes and so many times removed from the original notion, Goode's imagery is achieved through no less elaborate processes but rather stands as a redemptive statement of salvage amidst loss. While Richter's work reverberates against itself and fractures its own imagery with each subsequent interpretation; Goode's work is a fractal, chaos theory in action, no small act escaping reverberation, each introduced random ultimately building a new possibility through reassembly, a gesture of faith born less under threat of annihilation and more of the hope of reconstitution. →

LEFT: Joe Goode, among the most celebrated Los Angeles artists, at work in his L.A. studio. The new work space was created, in part, with the help of artist friends who helped raise money following a fire that gutted his former studio. Goode formerly called Tulare County home, once having owned a home and studio in Springville.



Interestingly, despite the cataclysm of the fire and Goode's inventive riposte, his latest artistic gambit closely tracks earlier interests. Richter explored the decomposition of a single image; Goode put his whole life's work to the test. The new body is a testament to the consistency of his vision over the last several decades, during which Goode has explored various processes of subtraction and destruction as key to achieving illusion. One noted earlier series involved layering ripped canvas over a painted substrait, rendering an illusion of skies and clouds whose delicacy defied the same destructive gestures that yielded the imagery, something of an elaboration on the slashed canvases of the great 20th-century Italian Lucio Fontana, who collapsed painting and sculpture together via one deft cut. Goode even used buckshot on some works, calling to mind Chris Burden, that other L.A. radical who once turned the gun on himself: body as canvas. Conventional art this is not.

Traditional oil painting is considered additive, with paint built up to reach a satisfactory illusion. But Goode's elaborate illustrative and subtractive processes act upon a work of art much like time and the elements act upon the earth, creating an archeological kind of art fraught with stresses, marks, faults and other seismic events. Just as road builders grade and leave rubble along the path to creation, Goode's art incorporates both the beauty of creation with the bedlam of destruction, work that retains an inherent acknowledgment that achieving the grandeur of conceptual elegance isn't always pretty.

One last Richterian reverberation is the fact that Goode used fire itself to create the original works that were later consumed by the very element. And as Scott Adams said, "Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep." Whatever the cause, the mishap by which these artworks were realized represents an ironic feedback loop, if perhaps a very costly one. The refraction is all the more elaborate considering that the original works consumed in the fire themselves incorporated photos of his art from every series of prior works, a retrospective of sorts. To say it all went up in flames is to discount the invaluable deluge of press that comes from something as elemental yet sensational as fire, art by a famed artist that was newsworthy before it ever left the studio (kids: Despite the upside, don't try this at home).



The more local irony is that for many years Goode called Springville home, as well as keeping his studio in Mar Vista (not far from Venice, which for decades has been a beachside artists' colony in Los Angeles, albeit an increasingly unaffordable one for most artists). But few here knew Goode's name, or that an artist of his historical importance was living in our midst. The native Oklahoman sold the Springville place some time ago, transplanted back to the big time L.A. art world where he started as a noted Pop artist in the early '60s alongside such greats as his childhood friend Ed Ruscha, and Wallace Berman, among many others. Goode's works are included in the best museum and private Modern art collections in the United States and Europe, and have been the subject of books and important museum exhibitions for more than four decades.

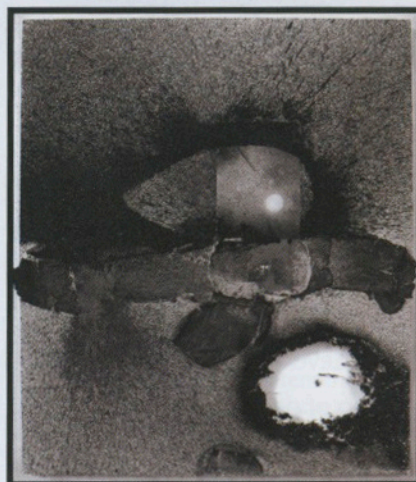
The exhibition at DNJ Gallery continues through May 24. ■

#### BELOW LEFT:

title: 2004mm 52 B&W Photo, Moon  
medium: archival digital print  
year: 2005  
11x13.5 inches

#### BELOW RIGHT:

title: 2004mm 52 B&W Photo with Paint, Moon  
medium: Oil, Archival Digital Print  
year: 2005  
11x13.5 inches



#### FAR LEFT:

title: 2004mm 40 B&W Photo with Paint, House  
medium: Archival Digital Print  
year: 2005  
11x13.5 inches

#### LEFT:

title: 2004mm 40 B&W Photo with Paint, House  
medium: Oil, Archival Digital Print  
year: 2005  
11x13.5 inches