



## Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2015

## BEN MESSICK: ARTIST

MARCH 5 – MAY 3, 2015



**SANTA BARBARA, CA** - On 1st Thursday in March, Sullivan Goss will open a wide ranging exhibition of drawings, watercolors, oils, and prints from the Estate of California Scene painter, Ben Messick (1891-1981).

His business card was straight and to the point: **Ben Messick: Artist.** During the Great Depression, he lived in the neighborhood near MacArthur Park in Los Angeles – then, as now, a lower and middle class area with an especially vibrant and multi-ethnic street life. He divided his time between his tumbledown apartment/studio and the parks, dance halls, circuses, and bars of downtown Los Angeles. His love for the city and its people was evident in every work he ever did. If his portrayals of Los Angelenos were sympathetic, they weren't soft. Some of his works had a satiric edge, leading one art critic to declare him the "American Daumier."

Benjamin Newton Messick was born in the Ozarks in Missouri. His father was a dreamer with a country store, where the young artist learned to observe and love the people who came by to jaw and do business. He served in the Army in World War I before moving to Los Angeles and enrolling at the Chouinard Art Institute in 1925. While there, he roomed with another famous California Scene painter, Phil Paradise (1905-1997). His long-time friend and artist Fred Penney (1900-1988) lived next door and Phil Dike (1906-1990), one of the key California watercolorists lived downstairs. Messick would go on to teach at Chouinard as well as at Disney and M.G.M., but his finances were shaky at best through most of the 30s and 40s. From 1937 through 1940, he was represented at the storied Stendahl Gallery in Los Angeles, and his lithographs enjoyed national acclaim through exhibition at such prestigious venues as the Smithsonian, the Pennsylvania Academy, and the Nelson Atkins. Today, his work is held in numerous museum collections and his images of California and Missouri during the Depression are considered vital documents of the era.

Come to the opening. Visit, explore, collect! 1st Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup> from 5 - 8pm.

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