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OOLONG GALLERY

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Oolong Presents ***Sun Goin' Down***

A Debut Solo Exhibition by 2025 UCSD MFA Graduate

John Singletary

June 6 to 25, 2025

Special Event in honor of Juneteenth 06/19, info forthcoming

Rancho Santa Fe, CA – Oolong Gallery is proud to present *Sun Goin' Down*, the first solo exhibition of painter John Singletary, opening June 6 from 6-8pm at our Rancho Santa Fe location. This powerful body of work, four years in the making, introduces Singletary's haunting, symbolic, and deeply personal paintings to the public for the first time.

Singletary's painting practice exists at the intersection of memory and myth, of personal and collective history. Drawing from Biblical tales, Southern folklore, his family's spiritual lineage, and even the work of Sanya Kantorovsky, Singletary channels a visual language steeped in longing, pain, and transformation. His work explores themes of death, love, and fear—the inherited fear of Black men across generations in America—and reanimates the sacred and the subconscious through ritualized technique and iconographic reference.

"My aim is to make paintings that create a separation from the self and its fears or desires, creating space for thinking."¹

In *Sun Goin' Down*, Singletary's process becomes part of the meaning. Through methods such as sgraffito, sfumato, sanding, and scraping, the very surface of each canvas bears witness to a kind of resurrection—a cycle of death and rebirth in pigment and oil. In the two panel painting "When I'm Dead" made over years at UCSD, remnants of an earlier work "High John and the Devil Blues" are buried beneath new layers and sanding dominates, echoing mythologies of flaying and spiritual transformation. The result is an image

that evokes what Singletary calls *Denkraum*, or “space for thinking,” a term borrowed from art historian Aby Warburg.² Figures and motifs—including trees reminiscent of Tarkovsky’s Andrei Rublev and a reclining woman inspired by Gauguin and Kerry James Marshall—meld into a haunting, contemplative tableau. The labor of sanding, says Singletary, “is evidence of toiling... of killing and bringing the image back to life.”

Singletary’s work emerges from a lineage of artists like Kermit Oliver, whose synthesis of myth and realism inspired the artist to move from drawing into painting. Like Oliver, Singletary doesn’t just depict the South—he animates its contradictions: Christianity as both salvation and trauma, icon and spell.⁴ His paintings pulse with the ghost-like presence of those who came before, and the spiritual residue of Southern Black life.

“Painting is alive—a deity that brings the dead back to life and allows what is absent to appear present.”⁵

Sun Goin’ Down refuses easy categorization. The works are both confession and apparition, echo and invocation. Rich in symbolism yet elusive in narrative, these paintings ask to be felt more than explained. They speak in the language of dreams—where trauma is transfigured into image, and gesture becomes truth.

Join us at Oolong Gallery for this remarkable debut by an artist whose work is already vibrating with the intensity of a masterful voice.

Opening Reception: Friday, June 6 from 6-8pm

Exhibition Dates: 06/06—06/25, 2025

Location: Oolong Gallery, 6030 La Flecha, Rancho Santa Fe, CA

Gallery Hours: Wed–Sat, 11AM–5PM | appointments with wide availability highly recommended

Footnotes:

1. John Singletary, Artist Statement, 2025.

2. Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms: Aby Warburg's History of Art*, University of Chicago Press, 2017.
4. Marks, Michael. "A Conversation with Kermit Oliver," *Texas Standard*, 7 Dec. 2021.
5. Graw, Isabelle. *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium*, Sternberg Press, 2018.

For media inquiries, high-res images, or to schedule an interview with the artist, please contact: info@oolongallery.com

