Joe Goode's Flat Screen Nature

Unlike a lot of transplants to L.A., Joe Goode was not amazed by the horizontal nature of this city where the sky is usually blue and broad. He had come from Oklahoma City, an even flatter expanse of terrain with far worse weather. He came in the '50s at the behest of his childhood friend Ed Ruscha and never looked back. Nonetheless, over the years, Goode has repeatedly explored the sky in paintings and drawings. His most current work, shown to maximum advantage in the capacious new Kohn Gallery, is on view through August 29.

In the 1970s, Goode would paint the blue sky as though it were a solid entity that could be torn open. Some of these earlier pictures peeled back illusion, with skies torn apart quite literally with slashes into the canvas or paper. We would be staring through that seemingly solid plane to the unknown beyond. Drawings from the '70s are also on view in the gallery as evidence of his earlier concerns.

In his latest work, Goode treats the skyscape and seascape in a painted emulation of the virtual radiance of computer generated imagery. He has often spoken of his ongoing interest in translucency, being able to look through skies, seas, fires, trees. Virtual nature offers that illusion of depth and dimension.

With these new pictures, some as large as a multi-plex cinema screen, Goode has hacked and chopped around the perimeters. They look as though they were decomposing through the wear and tear of passing time. The luscious surfaces were not generated by computer programs but painted by the artist himself, his hand perfecting subtle hues from marine blue to sunny gold. Executed on panels of fiberglass, there is an unreal sheen to them that paradoxically activates thoughts of mediated nature rather than actual nature. Inevitably, the glowing swaths of color balanced horizontally also recall Rothko, the embattled genius fighting the encroachment of banal reality. Goode, however, subsumes the quotidian into his representations of the higher realms. Dare I say the greater good? By Goode?