

HOLLYBUSH GARDENS
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ALTOON SULTAN

Preview: Thursday, 2 February, 18:00 - 20:00
Exhibition: 3 February - 11 March 2023

For her first solo exhibition at Hollybush Gardens, Altoon Sultan presents a new body of paintings. The formalism of Sultan's work attends to composition, colour, spatiality and light. Sultan originally studied with Philip Pearlstein and Lois Dodd in the late '60s and early '70s, situating her in a lineage of realism which shares an interest in precision and the vibrancy of interpretation. Initially exhibiting paintings of domestic, largely Victorian, architecture, Sultan developed a practice depicting expansive agricultural landscapes, later sharpening perspective to the landscape's related machinery and industry.

In this exhibition, Sultan continues her examination of agricultural implements and machinery through tightly focussed details. These concentrated views are the translation of photographs Sultan takes in spring and summer months at dairy farms in northeastern Vermont. This digital framework facilitates Sultan's intimate observance, the camera lens delimiting views that are pointedly subjective. These chosen details – focused on volume, colour and light – imbue the source image with a new sensibility arrived at by Sultan's use of egg tempera on calfskin parchment. Sultan isolates structural features to organise and estrange form on the canvas. This unsettled scale is resonant in the disciplined dimensions of Sultan's paintings which are never larger than 13 inches in height and width. This sizing contracts industrial components to a tangible scale, their proportion and palette not unlike those of 15th-century illuminated manuscripts – an early influence of Sultan's. In this process, Sultan's practice operates at the overlap of exactitude and fascination; fidelity and ambiguity; presence and alienation.

Such tensions are enhanced by the works' unusual subjects. Mass-produced machinery are attended to as volumes and colour-planes, their structural integrity replete with aesthetic potential. Each condensed, proximal isolation paradoxically withdraws and reveals: close frames display fractions of hydraulics and axes, contours and curvatures. Sultan's ardent attention prompts the viewer to speculate on the depicted fragment's relation to a larger engineered network or mechanical whole: its affiliated circuitry, its general scale, its ultimate function. Fixated to such a degree, these delineated and curtailed components proffer only abstracted approximations of form and geometry – their legibility is both exquisitely particular and utterly partial.

Sultan's uncanny examination of form and composition is explicitly articulated through a diverse palette, including tones such as aquamarine, azure, chartreuse, coral and cadmium red. Attuned to the sunlight in which Sultan's photographs are taken, such hues shift from the receding to the radiant. The chromatic fluctuation intensifies the oscillation between the observed and the obscured. In their brilliance and peculiar individuation, each painting restores a jewel-like luminosity and strange clarity to structures which, despite their prevalence and vital purpose, frequently exist in the abstract.

Altoon Sultan (b. 1948, Brooklyn, NY, USA) lives and works in Groton, Vermont. She received her BA and MFA degrees from Brooklyn College, where she studied with Philip Pearlstein and Lois Dodd. Sultan's work advocates a tradition of realism in which capturing perceived reality is second only to its stringent, vivid and precise interpretation.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Paintings*, Chris Sharp Gallery, Los Angeles; *Altoon Sultan*, McKenzie Fine Art, New York (all 2021); *Drawings and a Painting*, Feuilleton, Los Angeles (2020); *Altoon Sultan*, McKenzie Fine Art, New York (2017); *Modern Grid and Mystic Forms*, David Hall Fine Art, Wellesley (2015); and *Surface Tension: Lindsay Hook and Altoon Sultan*, Riverside Arts Center (2014). She has participated in numerous significant group exhibitions, including *Small Paintings*, Venus Over Manhattan, New York (2022); *The Stubborn Influence of Painting*, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (2021); *The Heat of the Moment*, McKenzie Fine Art, New York; *For America: Paintings from the National Academy of Design*, travelling exhibition at Dayton Art Institute; New Britain Museum of American Art; The Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach; Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis; New Mexico Museum of Art; Figge Art Museum, Davenport; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento (all 2019); *Through Line: Drawing and Weaving by 19 Artists*,

Steve Turner, Los Angeles; *New England Now*, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne (all 2018); *The Ritual of Construction*, Kleinert/James Center for the Arts, Woodstock (2017); *Looking Out, Looking In: Windows in Art*, The Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington (2016); *Going Big*, Central Booking Gallery, New York (2015); and *The Annual 2014: Redefining Tradition*, National Academy Museum, New York (2014).

Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; and the Fleming Museum at the University of Vermont.

For press enquiries and further information, please contact: alex@hollybushgardens.co.uk

Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm; or by appointment.