

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
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Donald Sultan

Mimosa, PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

April 4 - May 11, 2019

Reception: Thursday, April 4, 6-8 pm

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *Donald Sultan: Mimosa, PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS*, an exhibition of new work by the acclaimed artist. Inspired by a gift of mimosa blossoms he received from a friend in the South of France, Sultan began using the structure of the mimosa plant to continue his interrogation of the space between abstraction and representation, the organic and the industrial, as well as the history of modern art. The exhibition includes large-scale drawings and monumental paintings, ranging from four to eight feet wide, respectively. This is the first exhibition of Sultan's *Mimosa* paintings and the show will be accompanied by a catalogue.

Sultan executed the paintings and drawings simultaneously, and as a result they inform each other. Working out the density of charcoal and conte in the drawings first led Sultan to the paintings in which he uses roofing tar and enamel to create a richly textured surface. He continues his use of industrial materials, such as Masonite and vinyl along with the tar and enamel, to construct his paintings, which in their scale, heft, and dimensionality, are sculptural as well as architectural. Their exposed sides and edges reveal the process of their creation. Unlike prior series in which Sultan carved directly into the surface of the painting to generate his imagery, in the *Mimosas* he builds up the surface through a series of layering techniques applied directly to the Masonite.

In *Mimosa Jan 16 2019*, a cascade of black and brown leaves washes across the eight-by-eight-foot Masonite surface. The range in depth and luminosity of the dark palette is the result of washing the tar with turpentine after its application—a technique Sultan borrowed from his groundbreaking *Disaster* paintings of the 1980s. Combining fluid gestural brushwork with the precision of stencils and decals, Sultan creates a composition that is at once explosive and contained.

Color plays an especially prominent role in these new works as exemplified by the lush green foliage in *Mimosa With Orange and Green Oct 3 2018*. In other paintings, passages of light blue suggest the sundrenched skies of Southern France, and Sultan's mimosa blossoms range in color from dark blue, to orange, deep green, and indigo.

The circular forms that Sultan makes use of visualize the interconnectedness across the organic and artificial realms, and link this new body of work to prior series, such as the *Morning Glories*, *Buttons*, and *Dominoes* of the 1990s. The flattened discs have served as the center of a flower, the holes in a button, or in the case of the *Mimosas*, an entire blossom. Sultan has said, "the closer you work from reality the more abstract things can get." In distilling the mimosa plant into the fundamental geometry of its leaves and blossoms, it becomes something conceptual. It functions as a vehicle for the exploration of visual ideas—the "armature," as Sultan has called it, for a "gestural thought of leaves in general."

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Donald Sultan (b. 1951 Asheville, NC) is an internationally recognized artist best known for elevating the still life tradition through the deconstruction of his subjects into basic forms as well as his use of industrial materials. He studied at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and later received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago. Sultan rose to prominence in the late 1970s as part of the “New Image” movement, and his first solo exhibition was mounted in 1977 at Artists Space in New York. He has since exhibited worldwide in solo and group exhibitions, including the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Gotlands KonstMuseum, Sweden; Institute of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Memphis Brooks Museum, Memphis; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Musée d’art Contemporain, Montreal; Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. His work is included in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; British Museum, London; Cincinnati Art Museum; Cleveland Art Museum; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; Detroit Institute of Arts; Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, Cambridge; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Neuberger Museum at SUNY Purchase, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Singapore Museum of Art; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate Gallery, London; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Sultan lives and works in New York City.

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