



TOM ALLEN

AIR DE PARIS

TOM ALLEN

Born in 1975, Springfield, United States

Lives and works in Los Angeles, Unites States

Intricate and intensely chromatic, the floral paintings of Tom Allen are based on his own photographs, records of his direct experience of plants in situ. Distinct from the post-mortem display of still-life, or the passive features of pastoral fancy, his subjects are vital and knowing, holding court in environments humming with artifice.

Employing small-scale canvases, highly choreographed compositions and meticulous technique, Allen's work shivers with a visceral synesthesia of concentrated color, movement and space. In these pictures, being and looking fuse, mood and surface coalesce, animating images that look right back at you, fierce and resolute.

A selection of recent solo exhibitions includes "The Song," Chris Sharp Gallery, Los Angeles, 2021; "The Promise," the Approach, London, 2021; "Praeternatura," Air de Paris, Paris, 2020; "La-Bas," Lulu, Mexico City, 2019; and "The Lovers," Bel Ami, Los Angeles, 2017. Recent group exhibitions include "Particularities," X Museum, Beijing, 2021; "Blue Flowers," Le Maximum, Venice, CA, 2019; "Symbolisms," Cooper Cole, Toronto; "Ruins in the Snow," High Art, Paris 2017; and "A Change of Heart," Hannah Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles, 2016.

His work can be found in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Sweeney Gallery at the University of California, Riverside, and in numerous private collections.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Tom Allen
Air de Paris, Romainville, France
28.11.2020 — 30.01.2021

Tom Allen has a singular, if unusual relationship with nature. More chthonic than Arcadian, the so-called natural world he depicts in his paintings is in fact anything but natural. Indeed, if what he does could be considered an idealization of nature, then it is an idealization that goes the wrong way, to the point of excess, of perversion. The infernal flora that populate his paintings seem to not only preclude any kind of return to Eden, but more importantly, betoken a toxic landscape that is probably not even fit for human existence. What he makes doesn't even seem made for the human eye; as vibrantly colored as they are super saturated with information, they might be mutations meant for a more evolved optical capacity. This general quality of excess has deep roots in fin-de-siècle France, or the French decadents, specifically in the work of Édouard Vuillard and Gustave Moreau, the novels of J.K. Huysmans, as well as the Art Nouveau objects of Louis Comfort Tiffany and René Lalique. Synthesized with his long standing interest in mysticism and love of Heavy Metal, this frame of reference informs the crucible from which he produces his unique and preternatural vision of the world.

The six floral portraits presented in his show at Air de Paris were painstakingly crafted, often times with surgical precision, over the course of the last year. They see him pushing his medium to new, hallucinatory limits. From his black iris on orange paisley ground in VI to his fantastical rose and canna lily, the sheer density of information achieves new heights of retinal opulence. Meanwhile, the pair of double orchids, which represent day and night and which contain over fifty colors, could be seen as the twin poles around which this manifestation of Allen's universes revolves and visually explodes.

— Chris Sharp



Exhibition views
Tom Allen
Air de Paris, Romainville, France
2020-2021
Photo : © Marc Damage



Exhibition views

Tom Allen

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2020-2021

Photo : © Marc Damage

Là-bas

Lulu, Mexico City, Mexico

06.07 — 17.08.2019

Tom Allen makes figurative paintings of an unusually excessive nature. For the nature, so to speak, that he depicts is thoroughly and completely excessive, to the point of being unnatural. Drawing upon French fin-de-siècle painting and literature, such as Édouard Vuillard and Gustave Moreau, the novels of J.K. Huysmans, as well as the Art Nouveau objects of Louis Comfort Tiffany and René Lalique, Allen synthesizes this frame of reference with everything from the hallucinatory iconography of post 60s counter-culture to an interest in mysticism and Death Metal, all to optically harrowing effect. As carefully crafted as they are saturated with botanical nuance, Allen's generally small-scale paintings are the byproduct of a maniacal inquiry into color, form and space. They demonstrate an uncanny skill on par with that of Flemish still life masters or, say, Chardin, while nevertheless testifying to the pictorial invention of whole complex worlds. In this work, as per historical symbolism, nature assumes a thoroughly artificial revision. Infernal, magnificent, and presumably toxic, it, nature, is, if not idealized, then fetishized, the way, say, horror movies might fetishize the night. Finally, the explosive, otherworldly atmospheres and textures described in his pictures seem to be inhabitable only in dreams, nightmares or fantasy.

For his exhibition at Lulu, Allen will present a suite of six new flower paintings. All painted in the last year, they represent a new level of commitment, detail and quality in the artist's work. It's as if he has gone even deeper into the universe he has created, plunging further into its chthonic depths. In *Mirrors (South of Heaven)*, 2019, a pair of livid pink orchids floats in front of lavishly patterned space, while in *Passiflora*, 2018, a furious red passionflower, and its densely interwoven surroundings, pulsate with internal bursts of light.



Exhibition views
Là-bas
Lulu, Mexico City, Mexico
2019



Exhibition views
Là-bas
Lulu, Mexico City, Mexico
2019

SELECTED ARTWORKS



Dark Edges
2023
Oil on canvas
58,5 x 43,2 x 4 cm
Unique



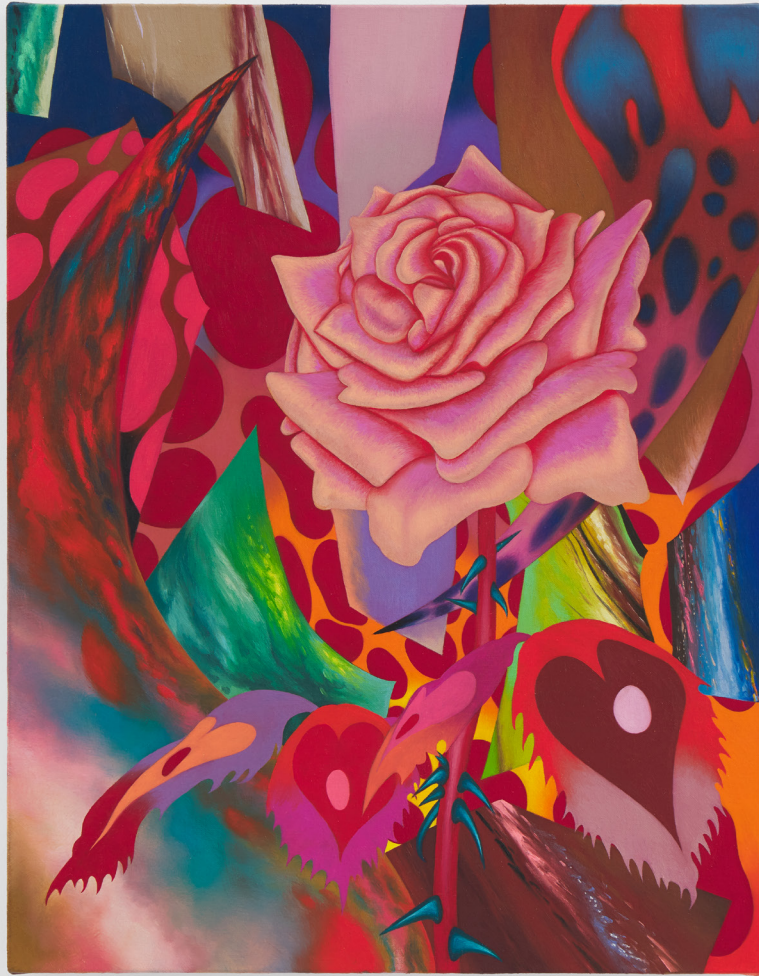
Vermilion, Silver, Blue
2024
Oil on canvas
33 x 28 cm
Unique



The Day
2020
Oil on canvas
33 x 28 cm
Unique



IV
2020
Oil on canvas
43,2 x 43,2 cm
Unique



VII
2020
Oil on canvas
45,7 x 35,6 cm
Unique



Serpentine Night
2020
Oil on canvas
71,1 x 58,4 cm
Unique



VI
2020
Oil on canvas
94 x 55,9 cm
Unique