

budapest

artotel

4.2

d. sultan exhibition



donald sultan

artotel budapest, dedicated to the american artist donald sultan, a key figure in contemporary painting, is exhibiting an unprecedented collection of his paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures in a museum-like permanent exhibition, offering its guests the unique opportunity to submerge themselves into his work and to rediscover painting with him.

artist background

born the son of a tyre dealer in 1951 in asheville, north carolina, donald sultan moved to new york after completing his studies in art in chicago in order to start his career as an artist. in those days young artists were often advised not get involved in painting, purportedly an outmoded form of representation. but sultan still chose to paint, and he got involved in the controversy surrounding painting. using typical off-the-shelf linoleum tiles he discovered a material that was congenial to the realisation of his ideas. he abandoned the traditional canvas, glued the standard sized tiles to plywood, covered them with a layer of tar and cut forms out of this tough black mass which he then filled with colour.

art in the hotel

in the collection at artotel budapest you can see works from his three central thematic fields: the "industrials", the "naturals", and the "artificials". when he arrived in new york, sultan was fascinated by the industrial cityscape. factories with chimneys puffing out smoke are evoked in the black tar surface of his early works. the factory smoke, ephemeral and as frail as an urban blossom, reappears in the series "smoke rings". other pictures are enchantingly elegant. butterflies rise up out of a black background, their yellow-brown and blue-orange coloured wings resembling filigreed membranes. with "three butterflies february 28 1955" and "double butterflies june 29 1955" the artotel budapest offers two outstanding examples of sultan's large format butterfly series, which can be seen in the dining room. the equally large format picture "birds june 11 1998" at the reception is also elegant, but more subdued – a picture showing the silhouettes of birds bearing white drawings upon their backs. sultan's elegant still lifes, despite their ostensible decorativeness, have a morbid charm to them. in the tradition of the masters of impressionism sultan paints fruits, flowers, eggs, some appearing to be coloured black, thus confusing the perceptions of the viewers: are they really looking at fruit, or is there a black hole opening up in the midst of this composition? a particularly fine silk print adorns the mellow-lilac coloured lounge in the hotel: "black roses april 20 2000" depicts a bouquet of black roses, the stems thickly covered in leaves, the blossoms barely open. black is the colour of elegance, but also that of sadness. black roses are often interpreted as the symbol of death. in sultan's works, which often unite paradoxes into a tense collection of images, beauty defeats these fears. such play with contrasts is characteristic of sultan's oeuvre. the works belonging to the thematic field of "artificials" includes the prints and paintings of the series "dominoes" and "playing cards": stones and cards whose symbols and dots obey a mysterious order. the white dots of the domino stones reappear in the buttonholes of the series "buttons". the shift from organic to non-organic forms transpires smoothly. the blossoms in the drawings contain black dots; in the drawings "green flowers with black centres april 11 2000" and "four oranges with black centres april 2 2000" the same circular disk serves as a blossom and as an orange. only the colours change. the ambiguity of forms runs through his entire work. the smokestack billowing out smoke turns into a streetlamp, the stem of a tulip into a vase. the smoke of a factory turns into fragile blossoms, a lemon into a light bulb of a streetlight or the calyx of another tulip.

total numbers of artworks: 579

best known artworks: butterflies, birds, smokerings

artotel budapest

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