ALMINE RECH

Group show
Alec Egan, Aly Helyer, Sylvia Ong

Sep 7 — Oct 7, 2023 | Paris

Almine Rech Paris is pleased to announce a group show of works by Alec Egan, Aly Helyer and Sylvia Ong, simultaneously on view from September 7, 2023.

Alec Egan

In his paintings of domestic interiors, American artist Alec Egan (b. 1983) - this is his first show in France –deliberately saturates the pictorial space with decorative elements. From floor to ceiling, flowery wallpaper patterns and upholstery fill his imagined dwellings with a colourfully ornamental *all-over,* often verging on a strange sense of chaos. This fantastical surfeit of pictorial decoration makes the Los Angeles-based artist's paintings equally repulsive and fascinating.

Lemons on wallpaper, a plate of spaghetti, a bouquet, a bowl of fruit or a picture of waves hanging on the wall form a juxtaposition of still lives and landscapes within the interior scene itself, a gathering of paintings within a painting. Alec Egan also often picks certain details of a given painting which he then turns into a kind of pictorial matrix to create new canvases.

In his figure-less figurative painting, Alec Egan picks up some traits from major modern artists: the decorative intelligence of Matisse, the lush ornamental abstraction of Vuillard, the ode to glorious nature of Hokusai or even the banality of everyday life as transcended by Pop Art.

As he switches between the domestic and the natural, Alec Egan also paints atmospheric landscape paintings in anachronistic, saturated colour schemes combining oil and vinyl paint in a manner reminiscent of kitschy 60s postcards. Marked by deep shadows, his palm trees, sunsets, snow-capped and multi-coloured mountains turn the dream they embody inside out, like a glove, endowing it with a nostalgic dimension, framing the world's fragility through the uncanny beauty of paradises lost.

Aly Helyer

London-based Aly Helyer (b. 1965) is a skilful drawer and an accomplished colourist working with a lively, warm palette. In her figurative paintings, her androgynous and impassive characters take on the appearance of antique statues, instantly creating atmospheres that are both strange and introspective.

In line with the tradition of expressionist painting, the long-necked beings who populate her canvases embrace, lightly brush against or protect each other, thus projecting a markedly humanistic range of feelings, from kinship to melancholy, from passionate love to absence. Tightly framed against monochrome or ornamental backgrounds, Aly Helyer's double-eyed figures are somewhat reminiscent of cubist female portraits produced by Picasso.

The British artist bases her almost dreamlike paintings on drawings, which can equally be sourced from a picture in a magazine, a Renaissance painting or from her own imagination. Often arranged like an intertwining of interdependent bodies, intimately linked by hands or arms, the protagonists she depicts ultimately engage in a psychologically rich mini-story. The deep blues and purples, the incandescent oranges, the bodily distortions and disproportionate sizes intensify this introspective dimension.

Fascinated by Giotto's painting for its ability to probe the human soul with unparalleled acumen, Aly Helyer's primary purpose in painting is likewise driven by her obsession with the study of human relations, embodied here by characters whose hypnotic powers liken them to surrealism.

Sylvia Ong

Before she became a painter, Sylvia Ong (b. 1980), graduated in cinematography, directed many short films, worked for television and radio, in fashion photography and for the theatre. The abstract work of the Malaysian artist, who lives and works in Dubai, has its roots in American action painting and European *abstraction lyrique* from the turn of the 1950s, with the likes of Riopelle and Nicolas de Staël.

Both graceful and gestural, Sylvia Ong's painting is fuelled by her many experiences in contact with nature, from Southeast Asian mountain and island landscapes to the Arabian desert, or by precise sensory memories, like the smell of the downpour in a rainforest.

Her atmospheric abstractions are also intimately linked to music: to her, a piece may instantly evoke chromatic tones, specific luminosity and shapes, rhythm and lyrical harmony overall. As she paints distant places and metaphysical dreams, Sylvia Ong's work can also be seen as painting of the psyche, through which she shares universal states of the soul with the viewer in a palette ranging from melancholy to sweet.

In compositions intimately linked to nature, the brisk motion of fine, oblique lines is balanced out by more static spaces on the canvas, composed of thicker textures and darker tones, thus opening onto a pictorial perspective where a sense of time suspended and weightless harmony prevails.

– Charles Barachon, writer and art critic