

ALICE BLACK

Becoming & Dissolving

The Art of Appreciating Simple Beauty in a Naturally Imperfect World

Date: Friday 15 September – Thursday 16 November

Private View: Thursday 14 September, 6-9pm

Gallery address: 47 Berwick St (1st Fl), Soho, London W1F 8SQ

Opening hours: Wednesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 11am-4pm and by appointment

ALICE BLACK will re-open after the summer on **Thursday 14 September (6-9pm)** with our second exhibition: *Becoming & Dissolving: 'The Art of Appreciating Simple Beauty in a Naturally Imperfect World'* is inspired by the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi* and brings together the work of 11 contemporary and post-war artists in exploration of this theme: Wolfgang Buttress, Dante Elsner, Jasmine Garrett, Howard Hodgkin, Soojin Kang, Kazuyo Kinoshita, Kate Linforth, Christine Marchese, Rory Menage, Norio Imai & Nina Royle.



The quiet constant of what the Japanese have for centuries referred to as *wabi-sabi* is beginning to gain traction in the West. *Wabi-sabi* has its roots in the Buddhist pursuit of simplicity and restraint, fostered through a deep connection with the natural world. In the 15th century it evolved into a distinctly Japanese ideal as a reaction against the dominant aesthetic of lavishness, ornamentation and rich materiality. Today it provides a welcome antidote to our contemporary world of impersonal digitalization, hard edged mass production and frenetic pace.

47 Berwick Street, London W1F 8SQ

aliceblackart.com

+44 (0) 20 7734 7018

Alice Black Art Limited | Reg no. 91849983 | Reg office 47 Berwick Street, London W1F 8SQ

Wabi-sabi by its very nature defies easy definability. It finds its expression in natural materials, organic processes, earthiness, irregularity, the unpretentious and the unassuming. It is about the subtle, the ephemeral and the evanescent. It bears testament to nature in its perpetual state of flux. *Wabi-sabi* prizes perception over reason. To observe it, and come to appreciate it, it demands we slow down and allow its muted, unconventional beauty to permeate us.

The works in this show have been chosen to reflect the core tenets of this mysterious and elusive aesthetic ideal.

Acclaimed British artist **Wolfgang Buttress** (b. 1965) says *"I think sometimes you can say more by being quiet"*. Buttress's practice fuses art and science to create installations which react directly with the natural environment. 'Liminal' is a cast acrylic cube in which a sun like sphere appears to hover and float, only tentatively tethered to its environment. This work and its corresponding drawing is a meditation on "In Praise of Shadows" by Junichiro Tanizaki and a precursor to the artist's 14 metre Hive sculpture currently on view in Kew Gardens.

Dante Elsner (1920-1997) saw his art as a practice of active meditation. His Raku pots were decisively inspired by the technique that had been developed to make the simple tea bowls used in the Japanese tea ceremony which is so closely associated with the essence of *wabi-sabi*. Elsner prized above all the qualities of spontaneity and honesty in relation to form, medium and colour.

Jasmine Garrett's (b. 1987) monotypes are created from many layers of fine Japanese Gampi paper onto which the artist has printed a palette of subtle, earthy hues. The restrained poetry of these works lies in their ephemerality, and the emotive manner in which they subtly diffuse the light.

In the oil painting 'Blue Movie' (1986-87) by the great, late, **Howard Hodgkin** (1932-2017) elemental shapes coalesce in abstract poetry, inviting us into an unknown space beyond. Between the softly contrasting greens and oranges there emanates an ethereal moonlight glow. The artists raw and direct use of brush strokes is at once primeval and timeless - their reach going far beyond the confines of the frame.

Norio Imai (b. 1946) the youngest member of the Japanese Gutai group, encapsulates the void in his embossed hole-punched works from the 1960's. For Axel Vervoordt, a leading exponent of *wabi-sabi* as an integrated approach to art and life, *"Imai's work goes beyond form and emanates a cosmic force. Out of almost nothing, Imai is able to create a monumental, monochrome white silence in space."*

Soojin Kang (b. 1978) utilises the poetic effect found in the 'interval', the space in-between. 'White' is woven from untreated silk, linen and cotton – its subtly undulating material plane punctuated with empty spaces creating a dynamic tension between that which exists, and that which does not.

Kazuyo Kinoshita (1939-1994) was a rare female conceptual artist working in Japan in the 1960s. A constant theme in the work of Kinoshita was the question of 'self' and 'existence'.

Kinoshita was keenly aware of her own mortality and through her art sought to affirm and explore her own position in relation to the 'whole', to the Absolute. Parallels can be drawn with Brazilian conceptual artists Mira Schendel and Lygia Clark who also expressed their conceptual ideas through lines and space on a two dimensional plane.

Kate Linforth's (b. 1972) 'Lumen' series harnesses the ancient Greek technique of 'enkaustikos' - meaning 'to burn in'. Layers upon layers of wax are painted within a gleaming split orb and burnished with a blow torch, creating a distinctive mottled interior landscape, mimicking the effects of elemental forces of attrition.

The humble peg forms the basic unit of the extraordinary and tactile sculptural works of **Christine Marchese** (b. 1967). Guided by a meditative, repetitive and contemplative creative process, Marchese masterfully harnesses her chosen medium, morphing it into something intensely organic in form. Marchese's works evoke infinite and intriguing associations of the natural world, while harbouring a compelling and intriguing sense of Otherness.

Forged in iron, **Rory Menage's** (b. 1988) 'Girl with Leaning Head' is inspired by *Ozymandias*, Shelley's sonnet-memorial describing the discovery of the shattered visage of a fallen king, half subsumed in the sand. It is the nicks, chips, scars and dents - qualities usually regarded as flaws - which here give the work its power.

Nina Royle's (b. 1986) small hand sculpted painted panels are individual expressions of landscape, weather, corporeality and time – they encompass a direct, material encounter with the physical world. The work can also be read as articulations of the constantly evolving painting process - fluid, fleeting and subject to change.

Wabi-sabi "beckons, comes close and relates". It shows us what we knew all the time, but did not know we knew. *"Wabi-sabi suggests that beauty is a dynamic event that occurs between you and something else"* (Leonard Koren). In coming to appreciate the simple beauty found in our naturally imperfect world, we may come to a heightened awareness of that which is around us and of which we are a part. There is no past, present or future in wabi sabi, just a perpetual state of becoming and dissolving.

Notes to Editors:

For sales and press inquiries please contact: Alice Black
alice@aliceblackart.com | (+ 44) 77 4348 8626 | 47 Berwick Street (1st Fl), London W1F 8SQ

Bibliography:

Wabi-sabi: For Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers, Leonard Koren, 1998, Stone Bridge Press.

Wabi Inspirations, Axel Vervoordt, Michael Paul and Tatsuro Miki, 2010, Rizzoli International Publications.

Featured artwork: Rory Menage, 'Girl with Leaning Head', 2017, cast iron & oak, 42x30x20cm, Unique