

c/o – Gerhardsen Gerner is very pleased to open the fall season with an exhibition of works by the American artist Lari Pittman. This is the second exhibition by the Los Angeles-based artist in our space, where he presents four new large format wall canvases as well as six new works on paper.

„Cactuses often play a prominent role in Lari Pittman’s recent paintings. Their green, often phallic protuberances impose a startling presence on the flat arid planes of many a desert; a wide range of adaptive techniques made it possible for them to conserve life-giving water. Evolution has transformed their formerly fragile leaves into prickly spines. Many of the species are night blooming depending on upon nocturnal insects, moths, and bats for pollination. Their greenness is altogether a wondrous mystery. Over the last four years or so, Lari Pittman’s paintings have become splendid enigmas in the desert of mistrust for the imagination’s power.“ (Klaus Kertess, *The Meaning of Untitled*, 2008)

Lari Pittman’s paintings take on complex and interlaced forms. In their narrative style, his works depict unique systems and hierarchies. Pittman brings together lines, abstract forms as well as stylized concrete objects in multilayered, palimpsest-like structures. The result presents itself almost as the site of an archeological discovery, in which the viewer becomes the excavator, bringing to light centuries of hidden strata.

For each series, Pittman uses a certain sign system. The focus of his 2006 exhibition at c/o – Gerhardsen Gerner was egg-shaped motifs, which were interwoven into different narrative systems. Each canvas cultivated a new environment that changed the signs’ meaning from image to image; while they seemed menacing in one painting, the tension dissolved into cheerfulness and humor in another.

Not unimportant to the images are the artist’s Hispanic roots. Pittman often integrates folkloric flora and fauna elements, mythological figures or Latin American fetish objects as well as items of daily use into his compositions.

In the artist’s new paintings, not only has the choice of motif shifted, but also the color palette. In place of the black, blue, brown, and violet tones that were in the 2006 series, are now warmer, brighter colors such as yellow, orange, and fuchsia. Cactuses have yielded flowers and the individual elements appear, more than before, to correlate directly to one another: rather than forming narrative islands, they assemble as a single unit. In addition, the egg-shaped motifs, which were dominant in 2006, have given way to other round forms, at times reminiscent of lanterns or cactus fruits. Indeed, the cactuses have begun to blossom and bear fruit, and a sea of colors and new

connotations has emerged.

The six works on paper reveal more intimate, partly surreal scenes and, through the choice of the depicted objects, pertain primarily to the domestic milieu: one showing an interior furnished with Western objects of reference stands in contrast to another with a nomadic tent; out of pitchers and vases grow human heads; a tent opens itself and grants a view into its innards ...

Lari Pittman's long and successful career began in the 1970s on the USA's west coast in Los Angeles. He has had numerous international exhibitions, including presentations at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Corcoran Museum in Washington D.C., the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. He currently teaches drawing and painting at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).

In Germany his works have been exhibited at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg and ZKM in Karlsruhe, and Lari Pittman is part of the renowned Goetz Collection in Munich.

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