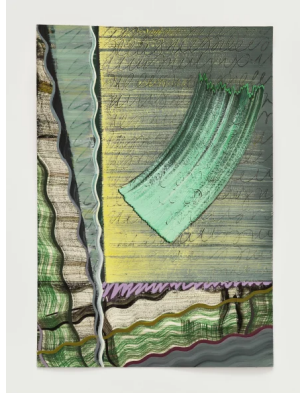


ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Alex Olson

Letters

May 1 – May 23, 2025

Altman Siegel is delighted to present a new exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Alex Olson, marking our final show at our Presidio Heights location. The suite of gouaches on view here is part of a series Olson began during her first trimester of pregnancy, when the toxicity of oil painting necessitated a change in medium. Perhaps subconsciously influenced by this state of bodily transformation, these intimately-scaled works demonstrate a particular lightness and buoyancy. Shades of spring green, bubblegum pink, and yolk yellow intermingle with more earthy, tertiary tones of mud, moss, and algae. Olson's brushwork functions as both an object, image, and calligraphic marks. While Olson's practice has consistently engaged with notions around the indexicality of mark-making, these paintings on paper can be read as letters. Each stroke, streak, and scribble seems to represent distinct characters in a novel alphabet or communicative method. Though this system's exact terms and legibility remain undefined, a lyrical logic begins to take shape and is subliminally intuited.

Paired with these gouaches is a new trio of paintings, titled *Shell 1*, *Shell 2*, and *Shell 3*, respectively. These works jump up in scale in three intervals. Like a Russian Matryoshka doll, these paintings evoke notions of motherhood, fertility, and family. In folklore, the nesting structure of Matryoshka dolls symbolizes the generational bond and connection between family members, particularly between mothers and daughters. Similarly, an interest in revealing the progression or growth of a painting is evident at the bottom of each panel, where bars of color appear to hatch and be peeled back in thick impasto, revealing another nesting shade or tone. One has the sense of the physical depth of each canvas through these layers of paint, beyond just the height and width of the picture. By playing with the texture and dimensionality of paint, Olson invites us into a multi-tiered landscape that oscillates between the pictorial and metaphorical.

Together, these baby-sized works on paper and nesting trio of paintings conjure an intimate interior space, both intellectually engaging and aesthetically energizing. From deciphering the hieroglyphic codexes in gouache, to witnessing the symbolic proliferation of a painted image in triplicate, this exhibition serves to reflect on intimate bonds and personal correspondences via the medium of paint.

Olson's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA; Josh Lilley, London, UK; Park View/Paul Soto, Los Angeles, CA; 12.26, Dallas, TX; Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago, IL; Laura Bartlett Gallery, London, UK; and Lisa Cooley, New York, NY. Group exhibitions include Josh Lilley, London, UK; Fondation Carmignac, Îles de Porquerolles, France; Mary Mary Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Finnish Academy of Fine Art, Helsinki, Finland; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; and Swiss Institute, New York, NY.

For more information, please contact Altman Siegel at info@altmansiegel.com or 415-576-9300.

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