

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Casual Time

Rodolfo Abularach, Xiaochi Dong,
Victoria Gitman, Kim Tschang-
Yeul, Alexandre Zhu

Opening Reception: August 2, 2025

On View: July 25 – August 29, 2025

Altman Siegel is proud to present *Casual Time*, an exhibition featuring Rodolfo Abularach, Xiaochi Dong, Victoria Gitman, Kim Tschang-Yeul, and Alexandre Zhu. Using closely cropped, tightly considered compositions, these works showcase the power of precision, in both form and subject, to describe the range of human emotion and experience. Through reduced, distilled, narrative slices, these works conjure an entire universe of feeling - pushing representational painting to its apex.

Incorporating organic forms, either in subject or within the physical makeup of the works themselves, this intergenerational and international group of artists demonstrate unlikely connections between a commitment to material, process, and meaning. Xiaochi Dong and Alexandre Zhu's use of earth pigments in the form of charcoal or volcanic Akadama soil, respectively, find particular resonance with Rodolfo Abularach's singular staring eye and Kim Tschang-Yeul's 3d water droplets. Each work closely examines the tenuous dichotomy between nature and culture, bordering on the surreal.

Abularach devoted the majority of his artistic practice to the rendering of just two shapes: eye balls and volcanos. Both were viewed as esoteric portals born from the compulsion to transcend the limitations of space and time by engaging with a reality that exists beyond our empirical world.

Similarly specific in his scope of interests, Kim Tschang-Yeul dove deep into his exploration of the water droplet as a source of Zen investigation from the early 1970s until his death in 2021. These trompe-l'œil tears paired with Zhu and Abularach's paintings of eyes form a compelling connection that spans history and place.

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Alexandre Zhu has forged meticulous charcoal renderings of timeless imagery in tandem with moments fixed in a distinctly contemporary perspective. Airplane windows and ponytails share a visual universe with the enigmatic waters of the Atlantic ocean and a mound of shifting soil. These works do not attempt to establish a hierarchy between culture and nature, but rather present them each austere, and on even terrain.

An avid gardener, Xiaochi Dong has developed a process of painting with volcanic Akadama soil, a means of incorporating *landscape* into landscape, so-to-say. Dong's tertiary palette adds to the subtle sense of quietude that permeates the entire exhibition. These dappled, vaporous compositions embody the temporality endemic to nature as they seem to atomize before our eyes.

Equally restrained, granular, and tactile, Victoria Gittman's work manifests through laborious beadwork, rendered in oil paint. Gittman's paintings, with their small scale and meticulous detail, invite an intensely close form of looking, an experience akin to touching with the eyes.

In their unique, adaptive, and disciplined approach to art making, these artists enhance and expand upon the link between specificity and universality. This exhibition also marks the first occasion Xiaochi Dong and Alexandre Zhu's work will be presented in the United States.

Rodolfo Abularach (1933-2020) is a Guatemalan painter whose work mainly focuses on the human eye. These pictures are haunting in their precision and specificity. Abularach's work is in the permanent collections of: Metropolitan Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; New York Public Library, New York; Hammer Museum of Los Angeles, CA; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California; Collection Grundwald; Sala Luis Angel Arango, Bogotá, Colombia; Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, Madrid, Spain; University of Massachusetts, Massachusetts; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California, among many more.

Xiaochi Dong (b. 1993) earned a master's degree from the Royal College of Art in the United Kingdom and currently lives and works in both London and Shanghai. Dong's artistic practice is deeply rooted in classical Chinese painting while also exploring the experimental logic of contemporary art. His works exhibit harmonious visual elements that seamlessly blend various aesthetic traditions. Drawing inspiration from artificial landscapes of different scales, including traditional Chinese gardens, botanical gardens, and miniature ecosystems, Dong explores diverse concepts related to simulating, imitating, and compressing nature. His creative endeavors primarily encompass painting and mixed-media pieces. By creating images saturated with hints of light, humidity and atmosphere, Dong aims to give form to contemporary images of nature.

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Victoria Gitman (b. 1972) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Gitman's small, seductive oil compositions on board intertwine the experiences of vision and touch. Depicting vintage fur purses, dazzling sequined garments, and intricately beaded textiles, Gitman's paintings are rendered with painstaking precision yet retain a distinctive warmth, softness and luminosity. Her works are held in the public collections of numerous museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Pérez Art Museum, Miami; the Detroit Institute of Arts; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, among others. In 2015 she was the subject of a mid-career retrospective at the Pérez Art Museum, curated by René Morales.

Kim Tschang-Yeul (1929–2021) is an internationally acclaimed painter who spent most of his career in St. Germain, Paris. Born in Maengsan, in what is now North Korea, Kim lived amid the turmoil of Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War, ultimately fleeing south under the threat of communist persecution and leaving his family behind. Kim's early paintings were visceral abstractions in the Art Informel style, shaped by the trauma and violence he had witnessed during the war years. In 1996, Kim was bestowed with the French Order of Arts and Letters, followed by the National Order of Cultural Merits of Korea in 2012, and received a second Order of Arts and Letters from France in 2017. The artist has participated in major international group exhibitions such as Korean Contemporary Painting Exhibition, Paris (1971); Salon de Mai, Paris (1972-76); Korea: Facet of Contemporary Art, Tokyo Central Museum (1977); Korean Drawing Now, The Brooklyn Museum, New York (1981); and Water, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels (2023). Kim's significant retrospectives were held at the Gwangju Museum of Art, Korea (2014); National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung (2012); National Museum of China, Beijing (2005); and Jeu de Paume National Gallery, Paris (2004). In August 2025, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea will present a retrospective of Kim's career.

Kim's works can be found among the collections of numerous institutions including the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; Leeum Museum of Art, Korea; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art; National Museum of Modern Art, Japan; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Kim Tschang-Yeul Museum, dedicated to collecting, researching, and exhibiting the artist's works, was founded in 2016 in Jeju, Korea.

Alexandre Zhu (b.1993) is a Paris-based artist working exclusively in charcoal. His tightly cropped, expertly rendered compositions are reminiscent of Veja Celmins, but are very influenced by his identity as a Chinese immigrant growing up in Paris. Recent exhibitions include Vacancy, Shanghai, and Victoria Miro, London.