

Lulu is proud to present a solo exhibition of the Los Angeles-based painter Tom Allen.

Tom Allen makes figurative paintings of an unusually excessive nature. For the nature, so to speak, that he depicts is thoroughly and completely excessive, to the point of being unnatural. Drawing upon French fin-de-siècle painting and literature, such as Édouard Vuillard and Gustave Moreau, the novels of J.K. Huysmans, as well as the Art Nouveau objects of Louis Comfort Tiffany and René Lalique, Allen synthesizes this frame of reference with everything from the hallucinatory iconography of post 60s counter-culture to an interest in mysticism and Death Metal, all to optically harrowing effect. As carefully crafted as they are saturated with botanical nuance, Allen's generally small-scale paintings are the byproduct of a maniacal inquiry into color, form and space. They demonstrate an uncanny skill on par with that of Flemish still life masters or, say, Chardin, while nevertheless testifying to the pictorial invention of whole complex worlds. In this work, as per historical symbolism, nature assumes a thoroughly artificial revision. Infernal, magnificent, and presumably toxic, it, nature, is, if not idealized, then fetishized, the way, say, horror movies might fetishize the night. Finally, the explosive, otherworldly atmospheres and textures described in his pictures seem to be inhabitable only in dreams, nightmares or fantasy.

For his exhibition at Lulu, Allen will present a suite of six new flower paintings. All painted in the last year, they represent a new level of commitment, detail and quality in the artist's work. It's as if he has gone even deeper into the universe he has created, plunging further into its chthonic depths. In *Mirrors (South of Heaven)*, 2019, a pair of livid pink orchids floats in front of lavishly patterned space, while in *Passiflora*, 2018, a furious red passionflower, and its densely interwoven surroundings, pulsate with internal bursts of light.

*Tom Allen (b. 1975, Springfield, Massachusetts) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include: (2017) The Lovers, Bel Ami, Los Angeles. Recent group exhibitions include: (2019) Dreamhouse vs. Punkhouse, Serious Topics, Inglewood, CA; (2017) Symbolisms, Cooper Cole, Toronto; Witch-Ikon, Mortlake & Company, Seattle; Therianthropy, Laura Bartlett Gallery, London; Ruins In the Snow, High Art, Paris; (2016) A Change of Heart, Hannah Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles; Outside, MiM Gallery, Los Angeles. He is currently at work on a solo presentation for FIAC, opening October 2019. His work can be found in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Sweeney Gallery at the University of California, Riverside, and in numerous private collections.*

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