

galerie gmurzynska

Galerie Gmurzynska St. Moritz presents: ALLEN JONES

Opening: December 29th 2015. 6-8 pm

With a special introduction by art historian and curator Marco Livingstone (London)
in the presence of the artist.

Exhibition dates: December 22nd 2015 – January 31st 2016



Allen Jones, *High Wire*, 2006

Internationally recognised as one of the pioneers of Pop Art during the early 1960s, the British painter, sculptor and printmaker Allen Jones (born 1937) took early inspiration not from consumer culture but from European modernism and particularly the work of painters working on the borderline between abstraction and figuration: Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Marc Chagall and Joan Miró were among his major points of reference. The Pop imagery foregrounded in his art during the heyday of 'Swinging London', often with marked erotic overtones derived in large part from the fetishist illustrations that served him as the explicit source material during that first decade, gradually became subsumed into a more timeless style centred on an economical and elegant drawing of the human figure. The paintings and sculptures he has produced since the early 1980s, a powerful selection of which is being presented by Galerie Gmurzynska in St Moritz, are contextualised by the work of some of the great artists of the 20th century, in particular Matisse, Picasso and Calder.

The paintings by Jones on view here, from *Counterpoint* 1980 through to *The Chair is the Trick* 2012, confirm him as one of the great colourists of his generation: thin glazes of gradated tones in sumptuous hues establish the sensuous, emotive and seductive atmospheres in which each invented scene is bathed. The imagery often centres on representations of stylised performance that provide a credible excuse for the presentation of graceful figures in movement and that function also as metaphors for the creation of the paintings themselves: dancers illuminated by spotlights, a seated spectator in her box at the opera, musicians and exotic dancers on a Caribbean island, and male magicians and their female assistants are among the cast of characters that animate these pictures and give them their celebratory, at times carnivalesque, air. Much of the action takes place on stages stripped bare except for the glow of colours suffusing each scene, providing a parallel between the stage as an area for performance and the blank canvas as the painter's arena of action.

Sculpture has occupied an increasingly important part in Jones's practice and is represented here by two characteristically streamlined recent works, each coated in a sumptuous monochromatic skin of painted colour: *Femme Assise* 2005, which relates

to the large *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* commission for Chatsworth House, and *High Wire* of the following year, a witty representation of a tightrope walker which came about through a commission for a sculpture intended for the foyer of the building designed by Sir Norman Foster at One Bishop Square in Spitalfields as the London office of the international law firm Allen & Overy.

The title of a painting made in 1981 on display in this exhibition, *I Hear Music in the Air*, borrowed from a gospel song, conveys the joyous mood of Jones's art and its aspiration to the condition of music. The show itself could well take its title from the earliest work included, *Counterpoint*, not only to transmit this musicality but also to convey the fruitful relationship in all Jones's work between two and three dimensions, between the suggestions of space on the flat canvas and their realisation in the round as sculptural forms.

Text: Marco Livingstone

In 2015 The Royal Academy of Arts, London staged the artist's widely acclaimed retrospective "Allen Jones RA", with catalogue contributions by Sir Norman Rosenthal and Marco Livingstone.

Jones's work is held in numerous collections including Tate, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; National Portrait Gallery, London; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; The Whitney Museum, New York and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Jones recently unveiled a major 20-foot-tall outdoor sculpture entitled *Dancers* at the new Brickell City Centre development, Miami, coinciding with the opening of this year's Art Basel Miami Beach.

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