



Diane Tuft, *Silent Sea (Entropy Series)*, Color Pigment Print, Edition 2 of 5, 53 x 80 inches (unframed)

Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present a selection of works by Reza Aramesh, Ryan Koopmans and Alice Wexell, Chelsea Odufu, Mitra Tabrizian, Diane Tuft, and Iké Udé for the ninth edition of Photo London, May 15th to 19th, 2024.

Reza Aramesh (b. 1970, Iran) is an artist who focuses mainly on photography and sculpture. He currently lives and works in London, where he moved at 15. He received his MFA from Goldsmiths University, London (1997). Working in photography, sculpture, video, and performance, Reza Aramesh's understanding of the history of art, film, and literature is ever-present in his artwork. As a commentary on war reportage, for example, Aramesh chooses images of violence appearing in newspapers, online articles, and social media, taking them out of their original context to explore the narratives of representation and iconography of subjected body apropos race, class, and sexuality. His work, as such, is a critical engagement with Western art history.

Ryan Koopmans and Alice Wexell's 'Spring Sonata' is a lens-based artwork from 'The Wild Within', a series that brings new life to abandoned buildings from bygone eras. Drawing from their photography of real-world physical spaces, this artwork undergoes a digital rebirth through a fusion with three-dimensional techniques. The specific building in focus is an abandoned residence dating back to the 1700s, nestled in Northern Italy. Its crumbling walls are adorned with hand-painted scenes depicting the myth of Niobe, painted by Nicolò Contestabili in the 18th century. This architectural backdrop serves as a canvas for artists Ryan Koopmans & Alice Wexell, inspiring them to unleash their creativity and reinterpret the space, transforming it into a new state. Having explored architectural ruins worldwide over the past decade, Koopmans & Wexell digitally infuse vegetation, modify the structure and lighting,

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

and alter the scenes to revive these empty spaces, breathing life back into the rooms. The resulting artworks present a surreal convergence of the past and future, the natural and manmade, the physical and digital, and the real and imaginary. The artwork aims to evoke a sense of surreal tranquility while reflecting on the theme of architectural history and its interplay with nature and time. Many of the buildings featured in 'The Wild Within' have succumbed to demolition in recent years, underscoring the theme of time's passage in the cycle of growth and decay.

Chelsea Odufu's "Gold with a Mind of Its Own" series delves deep into the intricate relationship that the Akan people of Côte d'Ivoire share with gold. From the spiritual taboos that surround its handling to its use as a socio-political symbol of the kingdom's might, and the haunting legacy of the gold trade, the spirit of gold resonates through the rich tapestry of Côte d'Ivoire's history. In this photographic series, Odufu embarks on a visual journey that seeks to portray the Akan people as a powerful African empire. Their quest for territorial expansion, wealth, and power, achieved through the mechanisms of war, trade, and regal splendor, is showcased as a defining aspect of their heritage. These images offer a futuristic, yet pre-colonial perspective of the Akan people, highlighting their strength and warrior ethos. The gold adorning the bodies of the Akan people transcended fashion and political statements through the use of images, whether in the form of animals or symbols. The intricate design of gold was employed to preserve ancient philosophies and stories of victory within the culture.

Born in Tehran and based in London, Mitra Tabrizian is a photographer and filmmaker who explores themes of migration and social fragmentation. Much of her work critiques corporate culture, the urban landscape, and the concept of the homeland. Drawing on the allegorical style of Iranian new wave cinema, her photographs of Iranian emigres focus specifically on a sense of alienation and a longing to return. Her work "Untitled", 2009 was shot just before the election of 2009 in Iran and alludes to the student protests - in a sense 'predicting' what led to the biggest demonstration since the 1979 revolution! Over a decade later, the work is more timely than ever. Many are finding that a great achievement of the events then and now has been the formation of a formerly absent sense of unity. Across differences of class, backgrounds, and diverging political opinions, the common question can now be posed: 'Are you on the side of the people?'

Since 1998, mixed-media artist Diane Tuft has embarked on global journeys to capture the transformative impact of environmental forces on Earth's landscape. Her photographs document both the expansive beauty of our planet and the dire situation that it continues to face if we do not provide a sustainable environment for its future. Tuft's "Entropy" series captures the sublime and awe-inspiring beauty of nature as it is radically transformed under the unrelenting pressures of climate change. Focusing on water as her subject, Tuft contrasts global sea-level rise with water depletion in Utah's Great Salt Lake. Tuft says "Water, in all its manifestations, offers an exquisite palette to paint my images. Each depiction illustrates the harmonious interplay of shapes and colors, birthing entirely novel compositions that transform with the shifting light. Each photograph intricately weaves its own tale of climate change."

In his Sartorial Anarchy self-portraits, New York-based Nigerian-born artist Ike Ude creates composite images of the dandy across geography and chronology. Ude photographs himself in disparate ensembles, pairing, for example, a copy of an 18th-century Macaroni wig with other carefully selected vintage garments and reproductions. "The incongruous pairing of the familiar...with relatively unfamiliar items," he notes, "is where dandyism can be stoked, problematized, renewed, and appreciated as a protean plastic art." Ude fabricates a particularly exaggerated vision of the dandy, confronting and questioning the abuses of the past while also celebrating the present.