

Neil Raitt: Floating Lands

11 July - 10 August 2024



Hot Spring Mountains (Purple Reflections), 2024

Neil Raitt

Huxley-Parlour are delighted to announce *Floating Lands*, an exhibition of new works by British artist Neil Raitt, opening in July 2024. The exhibition presents large and small scale works that reveal Raitt's evolving engagement with the landscape genre. Using a spectrum of saturated colours, Raitt's canvases depict classic iconography of the American landscape as replicating motifs: snow capped peaks, log cabins, cacti and rivers. New, large scale paintings explore idealised jungle scenes in which foliage is brought to the fore.

The exhibition's title refers to the ambiguity of space which defines Raitt's works. The artist suspends his imagery against richly coloured grounds, decontextualising it through repetition and juxtaposition, as waterfalls meet desert and cacti take root alongside pine trees. Raitt positions his work dichotomously between the real and the imagined, with recognisable tropes of classical landscape paintings manifest in idealised natural landscapes. Figurative realism gives way to the surreal as each repeated vignette appears subtly altered. Raitt's landscapes are resultantly uncanny, denying attempts to trace an original as the simulacral impetus overwhelms the picture plane.

In their verticality and saturation of colour, Raitt's paintings are lent a flatness; they appear almost as wallpaper or to mimic the pattern repeat of a densely-designed textile. This affiliation with decorative art evokes a domesticity which has long been a preoccupation of the artist's practice, exploring the uneasy hierarchies of that which is categorised craft and fine art. In their density, Raitt's paintings point to their own artificiality and engage with notions of the proliferation of imagery brought about by digitalisation. Through their own repetition they question the ease of replication in the digital era, while remaining firmly analogue themselves. Raitt revels in the material possibilities of paint, and its ability to reveal the process of its own making, embedding traces of the human hand within itself.

In this way, Raitt's practice finds parallels with critiques set out in Walter Benjamin's seminal text, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Benjamin identified a shift brought about as a result of mass production at the expense of the 'aura' of an original work of art. A nostalgic impulse has often been read into this interpretation of a pre-mechanisation Romantic utopia. In their idealised handling of the iconography of the American landscape, Raitt's paintings similarly converse with the genre's Romanticist traditions.

The prolonged influence of outsider art on the artist's oeuvre – particularly the work and teachings of American painter Bob Ross and his TV programme *The Joy of Painting* – offers a point of departure for Raitt's examination of these classical conventions through the lens of kitsch and the domestic landscape. While using the vocabulary of Romanticism in pursuit of a kitsch aesthetic, Raitt's work questions the stratification of high and low art, revealing instead with an economy of form the centrality of mark-making to the process of painting. As Raitt questions what it means to create a mountain, waterfall or foliage out of a brushstroke, the artist seeks an understanding of the impulse towards Romanticism, rather than its replication.

Neil Raitt was born in Leicester in 1986. He studied Fine Art at Norwich University College of the Arts before receiving his MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London in 2013. The following year, Raitt received the Catlin Art Prize, followed by the Northern Trust Acquisition Prize in 2016. He has exhibited internationally, including at the the Goss-Michael Foundation in Dallas and the Centre d'Art Contemporain La Halle des Bouchers in Vienne. Raitt's work is in the permanent collections of the DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; the Saatchi Collection, London; and the Frank-Suss Collection, London.

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HUXLEY-PARLOUR

3–5 Swallow Street, London W1B 4DE

Opening Hours Monday to Friday, 9:00am - 5:30pm

Saturdays, 1:30pm - 5:30pm

Entry is free

More information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com