

MEDIA RELEASE



Donald Sultan, Button Down Modernism Bel Air Nov 21 2016 2016, Enamel and flock on masonite, 122 x 122 cm  
© Donald Sultan. Courtesy Galerie Andres Thalmann, Zurich.

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **GALERIE ANDRES THALMANN, ZURICH PRESENTS – DONALD SULTAN: *BUTTON DOWN MODERNISM* JANUARY 20 – APRIL 1, 2017**

Zurich, Switzerland, January 16, 2017 - **Galerie Andres Thalmann is pleased to announce Donald Sultan: *Button Down Modernism*, a solo exhibition presenting recent works by the American contemporary artist. The painter, sculptor, and printmaker Donald Sultan who rose to prominence in New York's downtown renaissance in the late 1970s has been exhibiting internationally in the world's most prominent museums and galleries. The artist has become particularly well-known for his large-scale still life paintings and the use of industrial materials such as tar, enamel paint, gesso or spackle and linoleum tiles. These materials form part of Sultan's complex technique that stands in thrilling contrast to his powerful, reductionist yet expansive iconography.**

Donald Sultan (born 1951 in Asheville, North Carolina, now living and working in New York city) holds a stellar place among U.S.-American painting's august innovators. The artist's reflections on art history and the zeitgeist, the flowers, fruit and other subjects taken from nature play a key part in his world-renowned oeuvre. Sultan has received numerous accolades and awards, including three honorary doctorates; his works feature in major international museums and galleries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York, Centre Pompidou in Paris, France, and Tate Modern in London, UK.

The exhibition title *Button Down Modernism* implies the wide range of associations that have rendered Donald Sultan's work so complex and compelling throughout his career. In his most recent series of *Button Flower* paintings, Sultan expands his exploration of the mass production of goods – including artificial flowers - and industrialization in our highly mechanized and technological world. In the image of the button flowers, holes represent stamens and the 'buttons' revert to a subject that Sultan addressed two decades ago in his *Button Paintings (Eleven Buttons July 3, 1996)*.

Quite rare in contemporary art, the still-life, especially of flowers, was once considered an ideal vehicle for artists to convey their painterly skills and eye for composition, and to explore issues of perception and representation, form, colour and technique, as well as philosophical questions. Sultan's interest in flower paintings resides in the fact that, as he has said, flowers are 'intertwined with both the language of the human sensibility and the language of art.' In idiomatic expressions, such as 'rosy-cheeked' or 'fresh as a daisy', as well as 'pushing up the daisies', flowers symbolize beauty, youth and vigour, as well as transience and death. In his paintings, however, with their references to history and art history, Sultan has added a crucial new element to the flower metaphor.

Sultan's choice of paint and colour constitutes another key element. In the *Button Flowers*, he has used matte aquamarine or egg-yolk yellow enamel paint. The colours, popular for cars in the late 1950s but rather less so today, add to the large-scale 'flowers' a hint of nostalgia, evoking an era of progress and optimism. The iconic button, against or concealing a geometric painting or pattern in the background that could easily be a shirt or a jacket and the abstract shapes and the color palette borrowed from Piet Mondrian, the legendary founder of De Stijl, hint at the artist's reflection on the end of Modernism and of cultural idealism. The holes in Sultan's Button Flowers, representing stamens, afford not only a glimpse of the fabulous futures that were imaginable in the not-too-distant past, but also of our more muted expectations of what the future may hold.

“Some twenty years ago, it was precisely Sultan's *Button Paintings* that drew my attention to the artist. From the day in 1996 when I had the pleasure of meeting Donald Sultan in person, I have been greatly enjoying working with him. Many successful projects have seen the light of day since then and I am extremely honored and pleased to be presenting the most recent works of this extraordinary contemporary artist.” says gallery owner, Carina Andres Thalmann, who is Sultan’s official representative in Switzerland.

The artist is currently being honored in the U.S. with a touring exhibition of his Disaster Paintings. The show opened at the Lowe Art Museum in Miami, Florida; its next stage will be the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, before it travels on to several other major U.S. art museums.

**EXHIBITION: DONALD SULTAN, *BUTTON DOWN MODERNISM***

**Galerie Andres Thalmann, Zurich**

Vernissage: Thursday, 19 January, 6–8PM, in the presence of the artist.

**Exhibition: January 20 – April 1, 2017**

Galerie Andres Thalmann, Talstrasse 66, 8001 Zurich.

Opening Hours

Tuesday – Friday 11am – 6.30 pm

Saturday – 11 am – 4 pm or by appointment

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**About Donald Sultan**

Donald Sultan's large-scale still life paintings are filled with rich iconography—provocative objects, like bulbous fruits, set against a tar-black background. Although primarily classified as a still lifes, Sultan maintains that his works (despite their representational objects—flowers, lemons, eggs, buttons) are first and foremost abstract. Born in Asheville, North Carolina, Sultan moved to New York City in 1975 upon completion of his advanced studies. He is recognized as a painter, printmaker, and sculptor, and best known for his large compositions made following a unique technique: in place of canvas, Sultan covers masonite with 12-inch vinyl floor tiles, from which he cuts geometric and organic forms. Sultan fills the negative spaces with tar or plaster, followed by a layer of paint; his resulting images are distinctively textured and equally balance the contrast of positive and negative space. [www.donaldsultanstudio.com](http://www.donaldsultanstudio.com)

**About Galerie Andres Thalmann**

Galerie Andres Thalmann Zürich was founded in August 2009 by Carina Andres Thalmann, who brought many years of experience working for internationally renowned art galleries to her new venture. The gallery focuses on art in all disciplines by highly promising young Swiss artists and by leading established artists of world renown. [www.andresthalmann.com](http://www.andresthalmann.com)

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