



## DONALD SULTAN

Sultan's paintings have a loaded iconography: the still lifes, for example, deal with erotic bulbous forms as well as the potential for death implied in an artificially engineered environment. Almost all the landscapes he calls "events" are about disasters. They warn of the toxic poison floating in the haze of our ignorance of what creates chaos and breakdown in postindustrial civilization. A fuller reading of Sultan's iconography--and one wonders why it hasn't been undertaken, since that iconography is so richly provocative and relevant--would focus on the slippage between subject matter, content and form that takes place in a work of fine art created within the context of mass culture. To deal with these problems without becoming a symptom of them is not the least of the accomplishments of an artist who could well quote Andre Gide's advice to his critics: "Do not understand me too quickly."

Donald Sultan, an internationally recognized artist who rose to prominence in the late 1970s as part of the "New Image" movement, is known for elevating the still-life tradition through the deconstruction of his subjects into basic forms and the use of industrial materials. His paintings characteristically employ enamel, roofing tar, aluminum, linoleum, and spackle, pushing the boundaries of the medium through techniques of gouging, sanding, and buffing to create flatness, depth, and texture. The works are made of the same materials as the building in which the viewer stands; the architecture participates in the paintings. Weighty and structured, Sultan's paintings are simultaneously abstract and representational: while his imagery is immediately recognizable – flowers, daily objects, insignia, idle factories – the dominating, abstract forms contradict its common association with fragility.

Born in Asheville, North Carolina, Sultan studied at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and later received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago. His first solo exhibition was mounted in 1977 at Artists Space in New York, and his work has since been exhibited worldwide in solo and group exhibitions, including at: the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Gotlands Konst Museum, Sweden; Institute of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Memphis Brooks

Museum, Memphis; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Musée d'art Contemporain, Montreal; National Galerie, Berlin; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. His work is included in internationally renowned public and private collections, among them The Art Institute of Chicago; British Museum; Cincinnati Art Museum; Cleveland Art Museum; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; Detroit Institute of Arts; Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, Cambridge; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Neuberger Museum at SUNY-Purchase, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Singapore Museum of Art; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate Gallery, London; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.