

Allen Jones – BOUTIQUE

May 3 to June 25 2022

Galerie Ernst Hilger

Dorotheergasse 5, 1010 Vienna

Opening May 3 19:00-21:00

Allen Jones (b. 1937) is one of the most distinguished British artists of the pioneering Pop Movement and one of the last living Pop artists of the first generation (Warhol, Lichtenstein, etc). Working in commitment to the figurative, his oeuvre is characterised by an interest in the erotic, fetish and theatrical, as well as an abundance of experimentation; the result of a mind filled with never-ending curiosity. The exhibition “Boutique” brings together a curated capsule exhibition to highlight Jones’ versatile artistic oeuvre, including diverse media such as: Painting, Hyperrealist and Abstract Sculpture, Printmaking and Animation. The title is taken from a work which will be seen at the entrance of the show. Simultaneously, “Boutique” is a nod to Jones’ affinity with fashion, which has been a recurring theme throughout his career. Drawing inspiration from this affinity, the exhibition “Boutique” at Galerie Ernst Hilger works as a “place of desire” that invites the visitor to stroll through a colourful fantasy world.

Having received his Fine arts education at Hornsey College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London alongside David Hockney and R.B Kitaj, Jones moved to New York, the Mecca of the avantgarde, in 1964. There, non-figurative art, with Abstract Expressionism at its forefront, was the height of fashion. Jones however, in his own words, could never fully warm to abstraction, and while the Modern art world was boosting exhibitions by Robert Motherwell or Jackson Pollock, he found himself inspired by the massive influx of mass-produced images provided by advertisement, colour magazines and television, as well as erotic magazines. The embedded sexuality, sometimes overt, sometimes a little more subtle, fascinated him because the exaggerated poses and bodies reminded him of German Expressionism; presented, however, in a highly commercial context. In both instances, physical attributes and appearances are dictated by internal motivations and desires. According to Jones, figuration was brought back to the artworld because of these commercial magazines, an argument that is reinforced by the fact that Pop art was largely inspired by advertisement in general.

Jones also noted the theatrical element in both advertisement and erotic magazines, which sparked an interest in the performative. Whether a suspicious-looking fetish shop, a glittery and boisterous vaudeville, or an elegantly poised theatre, Jones took inspiration from and incorporated elements of each in his work. He played with the fact that what is perceived as elegant and aesthetic and what is perceived as debauched and overtly sexual is often a matter of context more so than message. The performative element was also what drew him to sculpture, which he began to work with in 1969. That year, he created “Hatstand, Table and Chair”, a sculpture series that remains controversial to this day. The series shows provocative, life-size and realistic-looking female figures made of steel and fibreglass, which are tied up and function as pieces of furniture. This sparked a wave of criticism from the feminist scene. In her essay entitled “You Don’t Know What Is Happening, Do You Mr Jones?” British filmmaker Laura Mulvey called Jones a sexist acting out his sexual complexes through art. In 1978, the sculpture series once again hit the headlines when a museum visitor threw stink bombs at it. Eight years later, on International Women’s Day, Chair was damaged by paint stripper during an exhibition at the Tate Gallery. Despite (or perhaps because of!) its polemic nature, the series has great pop culture and art-historical significance. Stanley Kubrick drew inspiration from it for the interior of the Korova Milk Bar in

his film “Clockwork Orange”. Jones’ style and affinity with fashion would continue to be sought after in cinema. In 1975, he created the set-design for the French feature film “Maitresse”. Karl Lagerfeld designed the costumes.

Allen Jones received numerous accolades throughout his career. In 1986, he became an elected member of the Royal Academy of Arts. He has had numerous solo exhibitions, including at the Serpentine Gallery (1979), the Barbican Art Gallery (1995), Kunsthaus Köln (2000), Tate Britain (2007) and the Royal Academy (2015). Since 1968, he has also regularly exhibited at the documenta in Kassel. His work is featured in many prestigious art collections, such as the Tate Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Hirshhorn Museum (Washington DC), the Wallraf-Richartz Museum (Cologne), the Moderna Museet (Stockholm) and the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam). Galerie Ernst Hilger is honoured to show the work of such an important artistic figure.

Text: Magdalena Polak