SOLO EXHIBITION

SARAH MCKENZIE

ALEXANDER RUTSCH AWARD FOR PAINTING 2019

MAY 3 - JUNE 22, 2019
Alexander Rutsch was born in Vienna, Austria. After studying voice in Austria, he became an opera singer like his parents, but after WWII, Rutsch’s love for visual expression propelled him to change careers. He was a painter, sculptor, philosopher, musician, singer, and poet. His life as a romantic is reflected in his work, as he sought to perfect his soul and humanity. “I paint my dreams,” said Rutsch. “My dreams are color and life. They soar in my head like millions of symphonies. I can never stop building dreams.”

In 1952, after studying under Josef Dorowsky, Josef Hoffmann, and Herbert Boeckl at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, Alexander Rutsch received a scholarship to study in France, where he made contacts and began collaborations with his contemporaries Picasso and Dali, among others. Rutsch said of his experiences with Picasso, “Picasso played a short but important moment in my life in Paris that affected my entire artistic future. I learned from him that it is not important if art is not aesthetically finished. It can be raw, uncooked, rough. If an artist feels he has said it – it is not important to polish or finish it. Because of Picasso, I learned that if I don’t feel the need to finish – I don’t have to.” In 1954, he exhibited his work at the Salon Artistique International de Saceux and won first prize for abstract painting, the first of many awards during his prolific career. During the 13 years he lived in Paris, Rutsch exhibited in many prominent galleries there and throughout Europe. In 1958, the City of Paris awarded him with the prestigious Arts, Science and Letters Silver Medal. In 1966, Jean Desvilles presented his prize winning film “Le Monde de Rutsch” at the Cannes Film Festival and the Venice Biennial. In 1968, Rutsch moved to Pelham, New York, where he continued to work in his studio and exhibit in galleries and museums worldwide.

Rutsch’s work, as seen through his mastery of various art forms – sculpture, painting, print-making, and drawing – has been described as “vibrating showers of lines, bold geometries, wounded anatomically rambling scrap-wood skeletons, enigmatic totem figures, and congregations of fetishized, domesticated, and recycled rubbish heaps [that] conspire to a fantasy of Expressionism, Cubism, Dada, Fauvism, Cobra, and Primitivism.” His pieces, as described by Emily Genauer, impart silence and the monumentality of primitive statuary. His sculptures are stylized to abstract construction made of “found” objects, welded and reshaped into bronze figures and animals of uncommon wit, airy grace, and individuality. His portraits are crisp, intense, spare linear characterizations that convey empathy. Pelham Art Center is proud to sponsor a competition and award to honor the memory and artistic achievement of Alexander Rutsch. Visit www.alexanderrutsch.com to learn more.

The biennial Alexander Rutsch Award and Exhibition for Painting is a juried competition open to U.S.-based artists age 19 and older. Pelham Art Center is proud to sponsor this competition and award honoring the memory and artistic achievement of artist Alexander Rutsch (1916 – 1997). Rutsch actively supported Pelham Art Center for more than 25 years. After his death, friends, family and supporters established a generous fund to support a biennial, open, juried competition in painting.

The Alexander Rutsch Award and Exhibition program continues Rutsch’s belief that art transcends all of our humanity. Rutsch saw art as “the stone in the water sending ripples throughout the universe.” His extraordinary work, rich in the celebration of life and our shared human experiences, is included in many of public and private collections throughout the U.S. and Europe.

Sarah McKenzie was selected from among ten finalists and 467 total applicants from across the country. The jury included Keith Schweitzer of SFA Projects, Art Historian Lisa Koonce, artist and professor Lisa Corinne Davis, artist Anki King, gallery advisory board members of the Pelham Art Center, and members of the Rutsch family – among them artists, curators, and art professionals. Finalists are judged with an eye to the breadth, content, and creativity to anchor a solo exhibition. 2019 Alexander Rutsch Award finalists included: Gabe Brown, Elise Church, Patrick Hammie, Adrian Hatfield, Katherine Mann, Heather Morgan, Christina Nicodema, Sarah Black Saddler, and Jage Schlesinger. The group represented a wide range both regionally and stylistically, showcasing a remarkable diversity of artistic talent.

Previous Winners of the Alexander Rutsch Award

2017: Sammy Chong
2015: Lindy Chambers
2013: Siobhan McBride
2011: Nina Rizzo
2009: Tracy Miller
2007: Liang Guo
2005: Dorothy Robinson
2003: Mitchell Marco
2001: Frank Trankina
SARAH MCKENZIE

My paintings capture architecture and the built environment in a state of flux. Past series have depicted suburban sprawl, construction sites, and abandoned, decaying homes and factories...

My current body of work explores the architecture of exhibition space: art fair tents, minimalist gallery interiors, and video-screening rooms. These are spaces designed to accommodate the temporary, accepting change and transition as a constant state.

Landscape 4, Upper East Side (Met Breuer), 2018, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48” x 72”
These white-walled rooms are at once austere and lavish; makeshift and highly controlled; impersonal and sacred.

Vitrine (White Cube, Mason’s Yard with Haim Steinbach, 2013), 2014, oil and acrylic on canvas, 24” x 24”
Projection (James Colam with Bill Viola, 2018), 2018, oil and acrylic on canvas, 36" x 54"
I am interested in the notion of **spectacle** and the role that architecture plays in orienting the viewer’s experience of a work of art.
My paintings also bring up issues of access and audience. As with all my past work, human occupants are notably absent from the gallery spaces I depict; this forces the viewer to consider his or her own position relative to the image.
With an emphasis on geometry, pattern, and surface, my paintings hover in a zone between stark realism and abstraction.

Playing with the materiality of paint, I apply both oils and acrylics to a single canvas and juxtapose various painting “styles,” deliberately undermining the illusion of depth and the unity of the completed image.

*Entry (Mitchell-Innes & Nash), 2016, oil and acrylic on canvas, 36” x 36”*
Landscape 1 (Danese Corey with Dzioni Bell, 2014), 2015, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48” x 48”, collection of Charles and Linda Hamlin

Black Bench (MCA Denver with Paul Setzema, 2014), 2016, oil and acrylic on canvas, 24” x 24”, collection of Wood Huntley and Beirne Donaldson
My work often appears photo-realistic when seen in reproduction, but—seen in person—the painted surface asserts itself forcefully, and the viewer is able to determine the process by which the image was made.

This is important to me. I care deeply about making paintings—physical objects with which the viewer will have a direct, visceral relationship and response.”
SARAH MCKENZIE

ARTIST TALK

Hear insights from the 2019 Alexander Rutsch Award winner during a gallery discussion

Free and Open to the Public

Sarah McKenzie was born in Connecticut in 1971 and grew up in New Jersey. McKenzie received her BA in film studies from Yale University and her MFA in painting from the University of Michigan. After graduate school, she taught painting and drawing at the college level for eight years, including five years as a professor at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

In 2006, she left her teaching position to pursue her studio work full time. Since then, McKenzie has exhibited at art fairs including Art Santa Fe and solo booths at Pulse, NEXX, and Dallas Art Fair. Her work has been shown at galleries and museums across the United States, and the artist is currently represented by David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO. The artist has received numerous honors and awards throughout her career including a Joan Mitchell Painters & Sculptors Grant through the Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York, and most recently an artist residency at the Ucross Foundation, Clearmont, WY.

McKenzie was the 2006 First Place Winner of the National Young Painters Competition, hosted by Miami University. Her paintings have appeared in Art in America, New American Paintings, Dwell, Landscape Architecture, the Miami Herald, the Denver Post, and the New York Times online.

SELECTED EXHIBITION HISTORY

2018 Summer Mixer, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY.
2018 Abstraction at Large, Site: Brooklyn Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.
2018 Elsewhere, Joseph Gross Gallery, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.
2017 Painted Landscapes: Contemporary Views, Heritage Museum, Sandwich, MA.
2016 White Walls, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO. Solo.
2016 White Walls, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art, Indianapolis, IN. Solo.
2016 Structured, Curtis Arts and Humanities Center, Greenwood Village, CO.
2016 Art + Environment: A Delicate Balance, Cleveland Clinic Art Program, Cleveland, OH.
2015 Art on the Edge, New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM.
2014 Contemporary Colorado, Curfman Gallery, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO.
2014 Transitional, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO. Solo.
2014 Collect: The Art of Colorado Corporations, Arvada Art Center, Arvada, CO.
2013 ten, Jen Bekman Gallery, New York, NY.
2012 Continental Drift, Aspen Museum of Art, Aspen, CO.
2012 Continental Drift, MCA Denver, Denver, CO.
2012 Faces, Places, and Spaces, Arvada Art Center, Arvada, CO.
2011 Drive By, Project 4 Gallery, Washington, DC.
2011 2010+1 Young Painters, Hiestand Galleries, Miami University, Oxford, OH.
2010 Concrete/Abstract, Rule Gallery, Denver, CO. Solo.
2010 Land Use Survey, Jen Bekman Gallery, New York, NY.
2010 Objectophilia, Capsule, Denver, CO.
2009 Mixed Tape, Jen Bekman Gallery, New York, NY.
2009 Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes, Yale School of Architecture, New Haven, CT.
Celebrating
50 years
of art, education, and community

PELHAM ART CENTER
ARCHIVE PROJECT

In 2020, the Pelham Art Center celebrates 50 years since its founding in 1970. To commemorate the semicentennial, we are revisiting our archives and recording our legacy by collecting stories from the community.

Do you have a story to share about the making of this cultural institution?
Contact communications@pelhamartcenter.org

#lovepelhamart
Take part in our 50th anniversary exhibition!
Snap and share a photo of yourself with a piece of artwork from our gallery, made in our studios, or collected through our events and use hashtag #lovepelhamart.

MISSION STATEMENT

Pelham Art Center is a nonprofit educational and cultural institution committed to providing public access to see, study and experience the arts, foster lifelong arts appreciation and thereby strengthen the community.

The Pelham Art Center strives to create a friendly and community-based setting that offers access to free exhibits and affordable classes that serve a broad range of participants with diverse backgrounds, varying income levels and age groups. The goal is to encourage ALL people to participate in family-friendly art experiences by creating an environment of inclusiveness and diversity.

Discover Art Center events, workshops, and classes:
pelhamartcenter.org
@pelhamartcenter

Cover: Door to the River (Whitney Museum with Willem de Kooning, 2015), 2016, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48” × 72”, collection of John P. de Neufville