

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Lari Pittman  
*Nocturnes*

Private view: 5 February, 6 – 8pm  
Exhibition dates: 6 February - 19 March, 2016

“I want to offer a painting that somehow the viewer has to stand in front of it and almost not believe it. But in the act of not believing it, what they’re actually seeing, they get swept away in it.” – Lari Pittman

Lari Pittman’s paintings are truly like no other: hyper-flat and yet intricately layered; seemingly chaotic and yet meticulously structured; puzzling and yet rigorously codified.

His works have, for over thirty years, re-invented and re-vitalised turn-of-the-20th century Symbolism, through a pictorial language that borrows with ease from such heterogeneous idioms as Pop, Rococo, Pattern-And-Decoration, Folk and Decorative Arts.

And yet, Pittman’s style is more Esperanto than Patois, as he seems more drawn into creating - and conveying - a universal and self-ruled form of artistic expression than speaking introspectively.

The Pittman jargon takes us into different realms every time. Four years ago, in his first show at Thomas Dane Gallery, he presented his chapter of ‘Thought-Forms’ – a lavish meditation on life and death populated by bells, mandorlas and mandalas that broached on notions of mysticism and animism. This time, he has imagined a suite of ‘Nocturnes’, as a series of paintings accompanied by a giant hand-painted book, his own contemporary revisiting of a Medieval ‘Enluminure’.

The palette has been purposefully toned down to more elementary, austere, and Camaïeu-like pairings of pistachio greens and earthy yellows; silky mauves and chalky browns. And this restraint brilliantly succeeds in emphatically highlighting the background of the compositions - a uniformly dark primer with sprayed night skies, constellations and galaxies. As never before, Pittman’s paintings seem to be looking outwards to a world we clearly do not understand.

Populated by robotic figures and cabalistic signs, the Cosmos-according-to-Pittman is meant to look and behave like the original, orderly and self-determined system it might once have been. The stencilled letters - part evanescent Morse-Code, part primal sound - dance around in a choreography at times derisory, and often sinister.

The idea of the ‘Nocturne’, is indeed deeply romantic and inherently musical. It has resonance in the work of Debussy, Fauré, or Ravel. And in painting, we think of Whistler. It aims at locating and sketching the contours and essence of a very particular Site – a place that instigates but also receives, where yearning and melancholia crystalize and dissipate.

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 12pm-6pm or by appointment

Admission: Free

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Nearest Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus