



KEVIN SLOAN

Fervent Emblems

Growing up in Iowa, Kevin Sloan took the landscape of planted fields for granted. They were the landscape. Driving recently from his home in Denver to visit an uncle in Iowa, he went through miles of plowed fields and thought, "This is so ugly!" He began his return trip at sunrise and driving through the same landscape, he saw it "transformed, almost mythic. I had to let my previous judgment go. Here was a land of extraordinary fertility. The plowed fields represent a harvest that will feed millions of people. The land is alive. It creates life."

The plowed fields now appear in some of the landscape/still lifes in the exhibition *Fervent Emblems*, now on view at K Contemporary in Denver through April 15.

The objects in the paintings are emblems of themselves, reflecting their own fervent vitality, representing the life force. In *Portrait of a Tulip Attempting to be a Flame*, the blossom expresses its own life force that begins to extend beyond its physical edges. One strange phenomenon of cut tulips is that the cells in the stem continue to elongate even after they are cut, pushing toward the ultimate life source, the sun.

Sloan has "pulled back a little bit from the allegorical paintings that were the driving force for a number of years," he says. Following in the tradition of still life paintings, the objects pointed away from themselves to ideas of mortality, greed or fecundity. In these new pieces, the objects refer back to themselves—"a crazy

1
Arrangement With Unexpected Good Fortune, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72"

2
The Sun, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 54"

3
Arrangement With Slight Risk, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 54"

4
Portrait of a Tulip Attempting to Become a Flame, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 36"





2



3



4

riot of color and form”.

The riot occurs in paintings like *Arrangement with Unexpected Good Fortune*, the fruits and flowers arranged in a blue and white vase, the fruit of the fertile field. At the base of the vase a pearl rests in an oyster shell. “I often used symbolic objects in the past,” he explains. “They’re something that adds a quality of mystery. ‘Why are those there?’ I like that there’s contrast and tension. I offer the opportunity for the viewer to start to ask questions, to have a conversation with the image and start to create narratives that work for them. It’s an opportunity, not a demand to figure it out.

“When people enter the gallery and see these paintings, I hope they feel surrounded by a life force that comes about because of the things themselves. They’re exceedingly bright, almost sentient—in things we consider to be non-sentient.” ●

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