

YOSSI MILO GALLERY



For Immediate Release:

Paolo Serra
Homage to Sassetta
September 10 – October 23, 2021
Artist's Reception: Friday, September 10, 6:00 – 8:00pm

Yossi Milo Gallery is pleased to present *Homage to Sassetta*, an exhibition of new works by Paolo Serra. The exhibition will open with a reception for the artist on Friday, September 10 from 6:00 – 8:00pm and will be on view through October 23, 2021. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States.

Against the backdrop of a world that consumes and accesses information at increasingly breakneck speeds, Paolo Serra invites viewers to take pause, insisting upon the value of slow, prolonged looking. Born in 1946, Serra became enamored of painting after viewing the Tate Britain's landmark Picasso retrospective in 1960. This new exhibition at Yossi Milo marks nearly sixty years after the artist's first solo exhibition in 1962, at Century Gallery in Northampton, UK.

Homage to Sassetta reflects the full variety and breadth of work resulting from the artist's accumulated knowledge of painting history, technique, and material. Over the course of his career, Serra has created painted works that span a range of shapes and sizes, from intimate rectangular canvases to circular panels spanning four feet across. A master of painting techniques from the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, Serra takes great care in preparing his own paints, pigments, and glazes. He is also fully immersed in Italian art history of the period, and his practice is actively shaped by engagement with such Renaissance masters as Stefano di Giovanni, "il Sassetta" (c. 1392-1450), and Piero della Francesca (c. 1415-1492). Most recently, della Francesca's *Montefeltro Altarpiece* (1474), depicting the Virgin Mary and Child seated beneath an apse with a hanging egg, motivated Serra's turn towards circular and egg-shaped works.

More than a reactionary concern with tradition, the artist's interest in recreating these labor-intensive techniques lies primarily in the performative aspect of the painting process. Serra sees painting as a dynamic interplay of opposites: creation and destruction, spontaneity and calculation,

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past and present. The resulting work represents the material trace left behind by this intensely personal, ritualistic act of painting.

Gold leaf, for instance, pays homage to the shine and luster of Byzantine religious works, and the labor-intensive nature of artisanal Italian craft. Yet it is with a fully modernist sensibility that Serra takes this material, frequently associated with lavishness and excess, and imbues it with a quiet, minimalist restraint. Under Serra's hand, gold leaf becomes a carrier for simple, formalist effects: the soft movement of dappled light across flat panels, and the burnished shadows on ovular, egg-shaped protrusions. In this sense, Serra's work invokes the legacy of modernist painters concerned with elements of color, depth, and form, from Mark Rothko to Barnett Newman.

There is a strong physical component to experiencing Serra's work. In one piece, a thin sheen of black, covered by layers of red paint, emerges like a hazy mirage through his use of a dense egg tempera. The full, dizzying impact of this black-tinted red is most richly appreciated when prolonged time is spent in front of the work. "Nothing comes free," Serra states. "If you really want to get something out of life, you must allow yourself the time to investigate things carefully, to look at them thoroughly. Otherwise, you can look all you want without really seeing anything."

The paintings in this exhibition invite us to "look thoroughly," and partake in the artist's lifelong contemplation of the medium's subtleties. His meticulous attention to color, material, and shape makes the very act of looking a fully kinesthetic experience, in which the painting changes with varying intensities and angles of light - depending on the time of day - or the viewer's physical height and distance from the work, as well as personal experiences they bring to the painting.

Born in 1946 in Morciano di Romagna, Italy, Serra grew up in England before returning to his birth country, where he now lives and works in the village of Castelleale, in Rimini Province. Serra has been exhibiting his work for nearly sixty years in cities across Europe, and was included in the English pavilion of the 12th Sao Paulo Biennial in Brazil. His works are represented in the permanent collections of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Arts Council of Great Britain; and the Rembrandt Society, among others.

For more information, please contact Alissa Schoenfeld at 212.414.0370 or alissa@yossimilo.com, or visit the gallery's website at www.yossimilo.com.

Image: *Untitled*, 2020. 24 kts Gold Leaf on Fiberglass. 21 5/18" x 16 1/8" x 5"