


TOUCHSTONEGALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 30 – July 1, 2018

PAIR-INGS STEVE ALDERTON

Opening Reception:
Friday, June 1, 6 - 8:30pm



Meet the Artist/Artist Talk: Saturday, June 23, 1 - 3pm, Artist Talk: 1:30

This press release includes questions and answers between Touchstone Gallery (TG) and Steve Alderton (SA) about his approach to painting and upcoming solo exhibit, “Pair-ings.”

TG: Given that you are approaching your 25th anniversary with the gallery, it seems timely to ask how your painting career began?

SA: After moving to D.C. in the 80s, my casual interest in painting changed. Soon after arrival, I met the late abstract expressionist Helen Covensky. Her large, active abstract paintings and big personality had a certain appeal. Helen spoke about the importance of painting with and conveying strong feelings. To her, it was far more important that her artwork have an emotional effect than that it was pretty.

I decided to start painting in a serious, focused way. Helen’s comment: “So, go paint.”

Other than two classes (mostly for studio space) at what is now the Corcoran School of the Arts & Design, I developed an art language on my own. That way, if the artwork fell short, I had only myself to blame. Existential. Magical.

TG: In your large, upcoming exhibition “Pair-ings,” what are you pairing—and why?

SA: This is an ambitious exhibit. It draws from both new and earlier series. “Pair-ings” focuses on the chemistry (or synergy) that results when select works of art are brought together. The chemistry can result from similarities or dissimilarities. Combining works can expand on a narrative or lead to an artful clash that wakes-up the pieces. Most importantly, a mix of artworks engages viewers because they are compelled to compose a story to explain the chemical interaction.

For example, in preparing for this exhibit I recently assembled a group of ten portraits that I had painted during the last five years. They varied as to size, material, gender and series. They had not been exhibited or grouped before. I scanned the lot. I liked these people. Assertive eyes and the set of their jaws suggested they were not the sort to cut and run. They oozed fearlessness. (And my perception of the fearlessness grew out of a repetition of that trait.) Though each figurative painting could have stood on its own merits—as a chorus, they each sang out much more intensely.

TG: You invited the sculptor (and former Touchstone Gallery artist) Michelle Frazier to participate in the exhibit. How will her work fit into “Pair-ings”?

SA: Michelle carves stone figurative works that show sensual, smooth human forms juxtaposed against rough, raw material (a pairing). They seduce and pull the viewer in. Her sculptures will add the missing dimension.

(Also, the exhibit is dedicated to Janet Wheeler—the ultimate “pairer” of artworks at Touchstone Gallery. For decades, she oversaw the installation of monthly exhibits. She taught each artist how the eye moves across gallery walls, and how well-placed works can not only coexist, but also interact in a way that lifts all of the art. We miss her touch.)

TG: Why do you paint?

SA: The process of painting has been meaningful. Painting was a patient friend during troubled times. It never disappointed (though, admittedly, some days in the studio were far better than others). Painting was a sublime distraction from the less attractive aspects of DC. It was an outlet for feelings when words failed. (To paraphrase Francis Bacon--if I could talk about it, why paint it?)

Finally, if one of my paintings causes someone to feel something/anything—that’s everything.



Images: "Pair-ing 5", Images a and b, Acrylic, 30" X 30" each; "Pair-ing 3", Images a and b, Acrylic, 30" X 30" each.

For more information, contact Ksenia Grishkova, Director, at 202.347.2787 or info@touchstonegallery.com