



48 WALKER ST | MAY 17 – JUNE 24, 2023

Alison Elizabeth Taylor, *Sawdust and Glitter*, 2022,
Marquetry hybrid, 50 x 75 in. (127 x 190.5 cm).

Alison Elizabeth Taylor

These Days

James Cohan is pleased to present *These Days*, an exhibition of new work by Alison Elizabeth Taylor, on view at 48 Walker Street from May 17 through June 24, 2023. This is Taylor's seventh solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, May 19 from 6-8 PM.

Over the past twenty years, Taylor's highly original approach to marquetry and image making has challenged conventional assumptions about art and the definition of painting.

These Days reflects life in a post-pandemic America, where vacations, social gatherings, video game arcades and public gambling have returned. In this new era, these works pose the question "what has changed?" Drawing from life, Taylor's subjects hail from cities as diverse as Brooklyn, Las Vegas, and Mexico City. Portraits of the artist's friends and family who departed New York during the pandemic are intermixed with scenes that capture the decadence and spectacle of Southwestern casino culture and the grit of Brooklyn's stoops and storefronts. Whether depicting moments of late capitalist indulgence in her hometown of Las Vegas or the struggle to survive in her chosen home of New York, Taylor's sharp social observation and empathy for her subjects come to the fore.

Among the works that take inspiration from the artist's neighborhood, *Try Us* evokes the precarious position of many New York mom-and-pop establishments. The work depicts the storefront window of a deli or bodega. Decals advertising an assortment of prepared foods mark the business as the type of familiar fixture seen on

neighborhood blocks throughout the city. Despite these recognizable signs, the details of the image reveal a less reliable reality. The lights lining the window are illuminated, but inside the shelves are bare. There are e-bikes outside, seeming to indicate take-out orders in action, but no people are present. These indeterminate signals prompt us to ask: Is it open? Has it survived? Do customers come anymore? Is it new, or was it there all along?

Conversely, travel and commerce are back in full swing in the monumental centerpiece of the exhibition, *The Hotel's Pool*. The piece represents guests at a casino pool lounging on beach chairs and playing Blackjack under the eye of a live shark. Scantly, identically clad waitresses and dealers punctuate the space, while a massive aquarium looms in the backdrop, simulating a lush aquatic environment incongruous with the desert landscape that encompasses Las Vegas. Here, Taylor's trenchant eye is on full display, skewering the synthetic approximation of natural beauty sold to tourists amidst the neglect of the outside environment.

All the works in *These Days* are made in the artist's singular, signature medium of "marquetry hybrid," which combines wood veneer marquetry with materials including painted wood, photographic collage, mica flakes, laser engraved museum board, and oil-painted passages on panel. Continuing to push the boundaries of her chosen materials, Taylor also incorporates sawdust—a waste product of her process—as a textural element in several works in the show.

Similar to the variety of materials Taylor uses to create her work, the artist's compositional process involves what she refers to as "frankensteining." Never drawn purely from life, Taylor crafts her pictures using a combination of live sketches, reference photographs taken by the artist herself, and memory. The resulting artworks cut to the emotional depth of her subjects rather than merely reproducing scenes. In every case, Taylor's perceptive depictions offer defining clues about the people that inhabit her images, creating evocative social portraits whether or not figures populate the picture plane.

Raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, Alison Elizabeth Taylor (b. 1972, Selma, AL) received her M.F.A. from Columbia University's Graduate School of the Arts in 2005. *Alison Elizabeth Taylor: The Sum of It*, a major traveling survey exhibition organized by the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA opened at the Des Moines Art Center in Des Moines, IA, in October 2022. The show, which is accompanied by a catalog, traveled to the Addison in February 2023. Additional solo exhibitions include: *Future Promise*, James Cohan, New York (2021); *The Needle's Eye*, Zidoun & Bossuyt, Luxembourg (2019); *Musée Historique*, Château de Nyon, Switzerland (2015); *Un/Inhabited*, Savannah College of Art and Design Galleries, Savannah and Atlanta, GA (2010). Important group shows include: *The Outwin 2022: American Portraiture Today*, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC (2022); *Reflections on Perception*, Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH (2022); *We Are Family*, New York Academy of Fine Arts, New York, NY (2022); *The Slipstream: Reflection, Resilience, and Resistance in the Art of Our Time*, Brooklyn Museum, NY (2021); *Personal Space*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR (2018); *Makeshift*, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI (2018), curated by Michelle Grabner; *I See Myself in You: Selections from the Collection*, Brooklyn Museum, NY (2016); *Crafted: Objects in Flux*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2015); *First International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Cartagena de Indias*, Cartagena, Colombia (2014); *Branching Out: Trees as Art*, Peabody Essex Museum, MA, (2014); *BEYOND EARTH ART: Contemporary Artists and the Environment*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (2014); *Unfolding Tales: Selection from the Collection*, Brooklyn Museum, NY (2013); *Surface Value*, Des Moines Art Center, IA (2011); 185th Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art, National Academy Museum, New York, NY (2010).

Taylor has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including first prize in the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition, New York State Council on the Arts/New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award and the Smithsonian's Artist Research Fellowship Program Award. Her work is included in the permanent collections of institutions including the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Orlando Museum of Art, Orlando, FL; and The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH. Taylor lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

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