

# David Risley Gallery

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**James Aldridge**

*Blossom and Decay*

November 10 – December 22, 2017

David Risley Gallery is proud to present the solo exhibition *Blossom and Decay* with new paintings by James Aldridge.

If we compare James Aldridge's work of quite a few years ago with those in this exhibition, there is one striking fundamental development. There used to be an easily identifiable depth in Aldridge's paintings. Even if the paintings were unruly, we were firmly on the ground and all the wild life made sense in the setting, it was clearly their habitat: A wilderness beyond man's footsteps, where the wolves howl. We are still in some sort of wilderness, but the context of its imagery has changed. They now swirl in a cosmic way, where there is no up or down, just the surface of the painting. We are not looking out but perhaps rather in. The paintings now operate in a different kind of space, which is more clearly and ruthlessly pictorial. They seem preoccupied with that space and how it functions, the rules in play.

Aldridge has created his own universe. He has an ability to make the heavy seem light, the gruesome beautiful and the contradictory harmonious. The pictorial language is a kind of patchwork or sampling of styles, from text book depictions of animals, to skeletal parts, to art historical references like painting a tulip as it was painted in Flemish flower painting 400 years ago to cartoonish vines running like guides for our eyes through the paintings, to an abstract expressionist loss of control, to elegant geometrical combinations of rectangles and squares. There are so many elements and details in every single painting, it is impossible to recount them all. The paintings are meticulous and incredibly loose at the same time. James Aldridge juggles and balances all these elements, combining them anew every time he makes a painting.

Through the process of layering, using different painterly techniques, covering parts up, Aldridge gives us a sense of the paintings being much bigger than what their physical dimensions may suggest. Like a kind of cosmic truth of light and darkness related to mysticism. They are both about making an image of something and the limitations, the rules, the clichés, all the challenges related to that making.

James Aldridge (b. 1971 in Kent, UK) lives in the woods of Småland in Sweden. He listens to black metal, is interested in the symbolism related to that music and he loves bird watching – all of which can be associated with the iconography of the paintings. But let us not confuse the artist with the paintings he makes. At the end of the day all art needs a spark to get going, but the spark doesn't keep the fire burning.