

Albert Bitran

Land of Shadows Land of Sky

3 MAY–2 JUNE 2024

DIRIMART DOLAPDERE



Albert Bitran
Oblique Noire, 2008
Oil on canvas
91.5 x 64.5 cm

Dirimart is thrilled to announce that it will be hosting the first solo exhibition of Albert Bitran, one of the pioneering figures of abstract expressionism that flourished in Paris after World War II, having an enduring significance within the movement from a very young age, owing to his distinctive style. Showcasing selected works created by Bitran between 1956–2013, the exhibition goes beyond mere chronological or stylistic classification; instead, it focuses on the spatial sensitivity that the artist has maintained throughout his career as well as the fluidity between the series he produced in different periods.

Born in Istanbul in 1931 to a Sephardic family, Albert Bitran ventured to Paris to study architecture and soon after, he became part of the Montparnasse artistic milieu, where he encountered fellow artists from Turkey residing in Paris, including Mübin Orhon, Selim Turan, Avni Arbaş and Abidin Dino. Embracing his long-held idealised vibrant art capital, Bitran opened his solo exhibitions at a young age and established connections with artists of diverse abstract painting styles, such as Jesús Rafael Soto, Serge Poliakoff, Georges Koskas, Horia Damian, Wifredo Lam, Pierre Soulages and Hans Hartung, and started to participate in group exhibitions.

In the post-war era of the Parisian art scene, there was a noticeable trend towards the dissection of elements in painting – volume, colour, depth and form – each to be individually examined and re-woven. In this milieu, Bitran continued his artistic trajectory that commenced with geometric abstract works in the 1950s, progressing to abstractions centred around open spaces from 1956 onwards. Participating in exhibitions such as the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles from 1952 to 1965 and the Salon de Mai continuously from 1956 to 1975, Bitran showcased his signature series developed over the years, including *Paysage* (Landscape), *L'Atelier* (The Studio), *Les Doubles* (The Doubles), and *Les Grandes Formes* (The Large Forms). Following these came the *Arcades* series inspired by his childhood memories, each depicted as a passage. In his *Intérieur-Extérieur* series, Bitran further explored the liminalities between the perceptions of interior and exterior through his abstract compositions which, in the later stages of his career, focused on their relationship with light, shadow and space.

Albert Bitran's exhibition *Land of Shadows Land of Sky* at Dirimart Dolapdere begins with a narrative where the artist invites viewers into his studio. The selected works in the exhibition, giving the impression that they were 'chosen by the artist himself', go beyond the chronological sequencing of his series and/or productions and invite the audience to a time when these works were seemingly together in the artist's studio in Paris.

The selected works – including Bitran's abstract paintings inspired by rural landscapes that he created following his living in the south of France, works that place the studio as the focal point, compositions challenging the conceptualisation of interior and exterior, and the artworks that focus on variables such as the presence or absence of light – collectively convey a sense of complexity. Bitran's later works in the exhibition, on the other hand, evolve into pieces that may be interpreted as the unravelling of new dimensions created by the



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accumulation of these series over time, each with its own dynamics.

Land of Shadows Land of Sky invites viewers on a journey into Bitran's poetic universe by posing questions about the origins of the artist's abstractions, which were woven around his sensitivity towards his surroundings, near or far, and the fluid relations between them. The exhibition can be visited at Dirimart Dolapdere from 3 May to 2 June 2024.

Albert Bitran (b. 1931, Istanbul; d. 2018, Paris) forged his identity as an artist in Paris, where he ventured at the age of 17 to study architecture and held his first exhibition there in 1951. During his artistic career which started at a very young age, his works were showcased in significant exhibitions of the post-war Parisian art scene, including *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* and *Salon de Mai*. Focusing on abstract expressionism rather than figurative narration, Bitran's artistic footprint extended beyond Paris with exhibitions held in Milan, Cologne, Brussels, Cuba, Stockholm, New York, London, Copenhagen, Tokyo, Istanbul and Lyon. His oeuvre has been included in numerous private collections as well as esteemed museums such as Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Istanbul Modern, Istanbul; Musée des beaux-arts, Lyon; Centre Pompidou, Paris and National Art Gallery New Zealand, Wellington.

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press@dirimart.com
dirimart.com

DIRIMART DOLAPDERE
Irmak Caddesi 1-9
34440 Dolapdere İstanbul
+90 212 232 66 66

DIRIMART PERA
Meşrutiyet Caddesi 99
34430 Beyoğlu İstanbul

