

# CASEMORE KIRKEBY

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**Larry Sultan** Editorial Works

April 13 - June 10, 2017

Opening Thursday, April 13th, 9-11pm

Casemore Kirkeby is pleased to present *Larry Sultan: Editorial Works*, a selection of images - many never before exhibited - taken from editorial and commercial assignments the late photographer Larry Sultan shot for *Interview*, *W*, and *Wallpaper* magazines, as well as ad campaigns for Bottega Veneta, Kate Spade, and others. The exhibition coincides with the retrospective *Larry Sultan: Here and Home* at SFMOMA, as well as the exhibitions *Fake Newsroom* and *Billboards*, showcasing the collaborative work of Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel at Minnesota Street Project. The opening will follow the Hank Willis Thomas lecture in the atrium of 1275 Minnesota Street at 7pm, part of the Larry Sultan Visiting Artist Program, a collaboration between Pier 24 Photography, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and California College of the Arts.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, Larry Sultan increasingly worked on editorial assignments with the intention to both support and inform his own artistic practice. Over several years, he developed strong collaborative relationships with a number of forward-thinking art directors, photo editors, and publications. Sultan's uncanny ability to visually illuminate their stories while simultaneously interrogating the imagery and its cultural underpinnings in a way that was sensitive, nuanced, seductive, and darkly humorous was deeply valued. The editorial work, in turn, gave Sultan permission to wander through situations normally off-limits to a non-participant, often creating a relationship of reciprocal influence between Sultan's editorial and personal work.

When *Maxim* magazine hired Sultan for an assignment about "Great Jobs," he found himself in California's San Fernando Valley, where the suburban home of an area dentist was being used as a make-shift adult film set. The house was located just four blocks from Sultan's former high school, serendipitously placing him back in the physical and psychological terrain of his youth. Within these mixed perceptions of home, Sultan knew he had found his next project. The resulting body of work, *The Valley*, examined the fascinating nexus formed by the use of these suburban homes and neighborhoods as set locations for adult films.

Featured in the main gallery of Casemore Kirkeby, and exhibited for the first time ever, is a series Sultan made on a subsequent 2003 assignment for *Wallpaper* magazine to photograph a line of modern furniture. At the time, Sultan was deep in the creation of *The Valley* and didn't want to lose momentum, telling *Wallpaper* he would agree to the shoot only if he could photograph the furniture at Vivid Entertainment, an adult film studio where he had been photographing intermittently. Cheekily coined "Porn Furniture" in his notes, and "Set for Seduction" for the article, Sultan staged the couches and chairs within the mise-en-scène of absurd and fantastical adult film sets - a pair of high heels strewn here, a set of handcuffs there. But Sultan simultaneously pulled back his lens to reveal the rough-hewn underpinnings of the enterprise and the banal workspaces of the surrounding studio.

Like all of Sultan's best work, the images comprising "Porn Furniture" resist easy categorization. As he said in a later interview with Drew Johnson, "Before one can file it into the known, there are these moments you get to see without knowing what it is yet. I think these are the rare moments of seeing, before one is completely protected or oriented by what we already have experienced. It's this great open moment in which you have to use your own eyes and look at the details and make up your own mind."

Also represented in the exhibition are numerous other editorial assignments, including photographs from a series documenting the denizens of San Francisco "high society," shot for *W* magazine, an image of Paris Hilton shot for *Interview* magazine, and images from ad campaigns for Kate Spade and Bottega Veneta, among others. The editorial arena proved to be a perfect venue for Sultan to engage the realm of pop culture, both as a testing ground for ideas that often made their way back to his personal work, and to bring those ideas to a broader audience via a sort of poetic subterfuge. Sultan's editorial work was an outgrowth of

his long history of engagement with a number of different, if overlapping, photographic languages, be it that of the institutional archive (*Evidence*), the home movie and family album (*Pictures from Home*), the forensic photograph (*The Valley*), or the advertising image (*Billboards*).

On the occasion of the retrospective *Larry Sultan: Here and Home* opening at SFMOMA on April 15, Casemore Kirkeby has organized *Editorial Works* for their Minnesota Street Project gallery in celebration of Sultan's creative legacy. *Editorial Works* will also coincide with *Fake Newsroom* and *Billboards*, additional exhibitions produced by Minnesota Street Project for their gallery 200. For *Fake Newsroom*, Mike Mandel and The Estate of Larry Sultan have invited artists Jason Fulford, Jim Goldberg, and Dru Donovan to respond to Sultan and Mandel's groundbreaking 1983 exhibition *Newsroom*, originally curated by Constance Lewallen for the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. *Billboards* will show the rarely seen, original screen printed billboard of *Oranges on Fire*, as well as images documenting the entirety of Mandel and Sultan's billboard projects dating from 1975-1989. The exhibition will run from April 12-April 29.

Larry Sultan grew up steeped in the post-war popular culture of California's San Fernando Valley. His work, a hybrid of documentary and staged photography, reveals the psychological nuances found in the everyday suburban landscape and family life. Sultan's pioneering book *Pictures from Home* (1992), was a decade-long project featuring his parents' interviews and family archive, interwoven with his own images to explore photography's role in creating familial mythologies. In 2004, Sultan published *The Valley*, which examined this same suburban setting now being appropriated as the backdrop frequently used by the adult-film industry. His project *Homeland* (2006–2009), further explored the intersection between a longing for home and fulfillment against the promise of suburban life by staging day laborers in domestic dramas. Sultan's first major U.S. retrospective, *Larry Sultan: Here and Home*, hosted by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, opened in 2014, traveled to Milwaukee Art Museum in 2015, and will open at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on April 15, 2017. *Katherine Avenue* (2010), the exhibition and book, explored Sultan's three main series. In 2012, the monograph, *Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel* was published to examine in depth the thirty plus year collaboration between these artists as they tackled numerous conceptual projects together that includes *Billboards*, *How to Read Music In One Evening*, *Newsroom*, and the seminal photography book *Evidence*, a collection of found institutional photographs, first published in 1977.

Larry Sultan's work is widely exhibited, published and is in the permanent collections of multiple international institutions including the Tate Modern; Stedelijk Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Art Institute of Chicago; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Sultan was a beloved educator and taught at the San Francisco Art Institute from 1978 to 1988, and then served as a Distinguished Professor of Photography at

California College of the Arts, San Francisco, from 1989 to 2009. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1946, Sultan passed away at his home in Greenbrae, California, in 2009.

**Image:** Vivid Entertainment No. 2, 2003. Archival pigment print, 30 x 40 inches.

**Location:** Casemore Kirkeby, 1275 Minnesota Street, #102, San Francisco, CA 94107

**Show Title:** Larry Sultan: Editorial Works

**Exhibition Dates:** April 13 - June 10, 2017

**Opening Reception:** Thursday, April 13, 9-11pm

**Gallery Hours:** Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

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