



Neonism by Aldo Balding

ALDO BALDING

Neonism

Dictionaries' define Neonism as a freshly coined word, a neologism, and Aldo employs it to emphasize the innovativeness of his work and differentiate it from his previous output. The suffix 'ism' implies a new avant-gardist movement like Fauvism or Expressionism. The 'Neo', as in Neo-classicism, designates a revival of a previous historical style, and here the tell-tale word neon, conveys a return to the nocturnal world of brilliant artificial light that ignites so spectacularly in Degas and Edward Hopper. Although a few paintings are tender, romantic and imply a felicitous consummation, Aldo generally deals with the rough and tumble of contemporary sex and the disappearance of the old rituals of courtship, romance and gallantry that brought out the best in lovers. He sets the scene in modish nightspots, chic cocktail bars or discotheques where people congregate in search of love, fulfilment and romance. Only rarely does the dream come true, and thus Aldo's principal theme becomes the pick-up and the one night stand. He is the laureate of loveless, erotic engagements and the loneliness, emptiness and alienation they leave in their wake. Everyone longs for love and commitment, but usually these rapturous expectations are cruelly dashed, and it is this irreparable loss that Aldo's paintings so poignantly lament.

There is a complete dissonance between Aldo's style and his subject-matter. The artist adores completely immersive lighting effects in which the tintured illumination casts its magical glow over everything within the picture space, unifying the image. His slightly off-focus technique further enhances the seductive effect by suppressing line, and replacing absolute clarity of definition with a melting fondant quality in which all is soft, smooth, sheer and as irresistibly tactile as silk or chiffon. Silhouettes and contours dissolve, harsh binding lines vanish and yield to caressingly soft and fuzzy forms so that Aldo's often blunt sexual realism is off-set by ethereal, lyrical poetry. The canvases brim with this mercurial blur and a sparkling haze of shimmer, gleam and glow transmute his urban nocturnes into fairylands of dazzle and radiant light.

Aldo's imprimatur is his obsession with tonalism and the dynamic interplay between colour, light, reflections and highlights. Tonalism describes painting in which the principal aesthetic effect is produced not by a variety of different colours, but rather by exploiting subtle variations of tone in a single colour, or a limited range of very few colours. Balding floods the picture space in overall, misty, colour tones, but instead of employing the dark, neutral greys, browns and blues dear to traditional tonalists, Aldo often hypes up his colour, and embraces hectic, strident and rasping hues with an edgy quality that induce the subliminal disquiet that underscores so many of his paintings where the mood is one of misgiving and unease.

Aldo's paintings pivot around flirtation and depict amorous Romeos hopefully making overtures to lovely women. What will happen next? All Aldo's paintings ask precisely the same question. Unresolved suspense and frustrated curiosity are their very essence.

Every painting is a puzzle that challenges us to figure out exactly what is happening. We engross ourselves in rapt conjecture and detection, but the facts are withheld, the evidence is lacking. The artist always portrays the before, and not the after, the prelude but not the climax, so the narratives remain teasingly open-ended and forever unresolved. Aldo's pictorial construction too is riddled with logical contradictions and irrational paradoxes that further unsettle the viewer, suggesting that something is amiss and not quite what it seems. But the artist supplies no answers, and it is this uncertainty that orchestrates tension and suspense and confers such a haunting and unforgettable quality upon Balding's imagery which continues to mentally reverberate, provoking lingering speculation and supposition long after we have last clapped eyes upon it. His paintings vigorously stake out a lasting place in our memories and imagination, and is there any surer sign of great art?

By Lloyd Pollack

Cyanism
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000





Subways
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4,000

Fluorescence
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000





Pink and Grey
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4,000

Red Streets
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000





Neon Rose
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4,000

Plugged Bar
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000





Magenta
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000

Le Télégramme
Oil on canvas
60 x 100cm (24 x 40 inches)
GBP 5, 800





Green Streets
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000

Halogen Passage
Oil on canvas
60 x 50cm (24 x 20 inches)
GBP 4, 000





Brettos
Oil on canvas
50 x 40cm (20 x 16 inches)
GBP 3, 600



Los Caracoles IV
Oil on canvas
90 x 120cm (36 x 48 inches)
GBP 9, 000

Biography

Aldo Balding was born and raised in the United Kingdom and currently lives in the South of France. He started off his career as an illustrator before moving to France to become a full-time artist. He is represented by a number of galleries around the world, such as the United Kingdom, United States of America, France and South Africa.

There is a narrative element to Balding's work in which he sets up scenarios, with no specific outcome, leaving it up to the viewer to determine what is going on. He believes that the way a person holds their body can say more about their feelings and intentions, than words. His subtle use of space distortion creates a sense that something is amiss or is about to happen. Similar talents were shown by the great black and white movie filmmakers (like Hitchcock) and there is a sense that many of his pictures could be stills from a movie. Balding considers himself a storyteller, he takes an idea and moulds it to his liking; furthermore, the colours, the figures, the scenery are all adjusted for the viewer based on what he wants them to see.

Living in the South of France, he likes to paint in direct sunlight. He prefers to be "stingy" in colour tones, using no more than five or six at any one time. The work normally has a predominant tone or key to it, usually in the mid or dark range. This means that more than 50 percent of the canvas is occupied by one or two closely related tones; this method has been used by great artists such as, Sargent, Sorolla, Zorn and Munnings. Balding considers himself a tonalist painter, though colour is another tool he likes to employ to influence mood. He looks for colour harmonies that already exist in the subject. He squints a lot when painting and this helps him to simplify everything, see things within a hierarchy- the sharpest edge, the lightest part, the order of things that he is searching for. His inspiration, ideas and subject matter can originate from something he has seen- a man in a café, a woman crossing a street; or it can be an idea he has set up, where he has used a model, wearing something from his collection of clothes ranging from the 1940's to the present day. The models act out an idea in his studio or on location rather than pose formally, which he then photographs during the ideas stage. He works quickly spending almost as much time on the set-up and ideas as the painting itself. A mid-sized painting normally takes between 2 to 3 days in an 'alla prima' style as he tries to work sections at a time to keep the 'wet-in-wet' technique.

Solo Exhibitions:

Galerie Marine en Ré, Bois-Colombes, France, June 8 2019
Galerie Anagama, Versailles, 13 January 2019
2015, 2013, 2011: Christopher Moller Art
2008, 2006: Catto Gallery
2006: Alexander Gallery, Bristol

Group Exhibitions:

2018: IAACC Pablo Serrano de Zaragoza Museum Exhibition
2018: Barcelona Museum of Modern Art MEAM Exhibition
2017: Thompsons Gallery London three man show
2016: ROI exhibition
2016, 2014, 2011, 2009, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2003, 2002: Royal Society of Portrait Painters
2009: ING Discerning Eye
2000: BP Awards

Christopher Moller **Gallery**