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# TOUCHSTONEGALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 4 - 29, 2020

## Marrakech Portraits by Steve Alderton

**Opening Reception: Friday, March 13, 6 - 8:30pm**

Steve Alderton, a long time member of Touchstone Gallery, was busy planning this exhibit, Marrakech Portraits, a series of paintings inspired by a trip he took there in 2018, when he suddenly and unexpectedly died. The paintings in this exhibit have many of the features familiar in his work – an expressionist use of color with passing references to the cubists' architecture of space and the impressionists' hunger to recreate the intensity of sensual experience. Yet they often move in new directions. In particular he uses an earthier and darker palette, the people looking out from his paintings exuding a more complex emotionality than is conveyed in the wildflower-like symphony of bright colors that typify his earlier portraits.



One portrait, apparently a boy (all of the works in this show are untitled as Alderton died before he had a chance to name them), is almost entirely in lilac and eggplant apart from the black of the hair, a tiny curl of blue sitting inexplicably yet perfectly at the edge of the hairline, the hint of white on one ear suggesting a light source to the side or back. He also uses the tiniest dots of white at the eyes' corners to let us know the eyes are open and alive albeit inwardly focused.

Another portrait, a bearded man, again contrasts dramatically with his earlier portraiture in that it is built entirely of earth tones. His skin is burnt umber, the curve of the top of his bald head catches the light, a pale gold, as does the side of his nose. The unlit side of his face is almost entirely hidden, bathed in green-gray shadow. And in another departure from past work, the background is a flurry of textured grays. As in the boy, the man's blackened eyes with just a hint of white creates the sense of someone unaware of being watched, someone more attuned to what is inside than what is outside.

Alderton, although rarely using text in his work, includes on one portrait a portion of a poem by the Sudanese poet Al-Saddiq Al-Raddi. In English, it reads:

The body of a bird in your mouth breathing songs.  
Raw light spills from your eyes, utterly naked.  
What is the distance between my voice and my longing?

This, the show he was working on when he died, presents the culmination of his effort to breach the chasm between voice and longing, between a feeling felt and the artist's attempt to recreate it, an effort he pursued over the course of his prolific and productive career in his too-short life. While leaving a few pieces possibly unfinished or in the process of being altered, he left an opening for a dialogue as to when an artist feels their work to be complete.



*Net proceeds from the artwork sales will go to So Others Might Eat.*

*Images: Untitled 13, Untitled 7*

*For more information please contact Ksenia Grishkova, Director, at [info@touchstonegallery.com](mailto:info@touchstonegallery.com) or 202-347-2787.*