

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Larry Sultan**

***Domestic Theater***

February 21 – April 6, 2019



Yancey Richardson is pleased to present *Larry Sultan: Domestic Theater*, the first exhibition of the California artist (1946-2009) in New York since 2004. The photographs are selected from Sultan's series *Pictures from Home* (1983), *Untitled Home Movie Stills* (1984-93) and *The Valley* (1997-2003), in addition to editorial work made between 1993 and 2003 for Wallpaper and Bottega Veneta. Sultan probed the medium of photography, experimenting with its structure and challenging its truth-telling capabilities. A hybrid of documentary and staged photography often touched with tender irony, his photographs mine the psychological nuances in daily family interaction across the suburban landscape.

Throughout, Sultan's images negotiate between reality and fantasy, domesticity and desire, revealing the personal and the idiosyncratic in the flow of ordinary life.

*Pictures from Home* chronicles Sultan's parents' pursuit of the American dream, played out in the suburban landscapes of Los Angeles and Palm Desert, California, while simultaneously exploring the complexities of family dynamics and mythmaking. Fully realized as a book in 1992, *Pictures from Home* combines spontaneous photographs of the artist's parents with those he staged, home movie stills, interviews and ruminations of his own. The frames Sultan selectively printed from his family's home movies reveal an idyllic narrative of the family on vacations, in convertibles or playing in a sundrenched yard. Sultan describes these as "...folktales – epic celebrations of the family. They were remarkable, more like a record of hopes and fantasies than of actual events. It was as if my parents had projected their dreams onto film emulsion."

Intrigued by Sultan's blending of authenticity with fiction, and his merging of the mundane with the absurd, a wide array of publications such as the *New York Times*, *Details*, *Vanity Fair*, *Interview* and *W* commissioned him to bring a similar sensibility to their pages. Forward-thinking photo editors and magazines valued 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. Within the confines of these assignments, Sultan found a way to make work very much his own, imbuing the resulting pictures with a characteristic ambiguity, mystery and absurdity.

Just as his personal work shaped his editorial work, the assignments informed Sultan's personal projects, leading most significantly to the extended series *The Valley*. On assignment in 1997 Sultan discovered that the adult-film industry frequently rented the suburban tract houses of his childhood neighborhood in order to create x-rated dramas. Photographing during porn shoots in the homes of dentists, lawyers and accountants, Sultan juxtaposed the naked bodies of actors with the mundane domesticity of the homes, including glimpses of the jeans-clad production crew and their hard-edged equipment as visual clues. As Sultan explains, "I'm interested, not in the construction of pornography, but rather in dismantling it, in

# YANCEY RICHARDSON

exploring domesticity, the construction of desire; all as a way of dealing with my own projections, my own nostalgia of growing up in those houses...by photographing this I'm planted squarely in the terrain of my own ambivalence – that rich and fertile field that stretches out between fascination and repulsion, desire and loss. I'm home again.”

Larry Sultan's work has been widely exhibited in museums including the New Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Barbican Art Gallery and the Centre George Pompidou. The retrospective exhibition *Larry Sultan: Here and Home* (2014 – 2015) travelled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Milwaukee Art Museum. Examples of his work are featured in the collections of the Tate Modern, Stedelijk Museum, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Sultan's monographs include among others the retrospective catalog *Here and Home* (2014, Los Angeles County Museum, Prestel, Delmonico Books), *Pictures from Home* (Abrams, 1992 and MACK, 2017), *Katherine Avenue* (2010, Steidl), *The Valley* (2004, Scalo), in addition to books self-published with Mike Mandel, *Evidence* (1977) and *How to Read Music in One Evening* (1974).

Sultan served as an Elected Member of the Board of Trustees at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and as a member of the Board of Trustees at Headlands Center for the Arts. A beloved and influential professor, Sultan taught at the San Francisco Art Institute, 1978 - 1988 and served as a Distinguished Professor of Photography and Chair of Photography Department at California College of the Arts, San Francisco, 1989 - 2009. Among many awards, Larry Sultan was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, United States State Department International Arts and Lectures Grant, and in 2015 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Pier 24 Photography, The Headlands Center for the Arts and California College of the Arts announced The Larry Sultan Award. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1946, Larry Sultan passed away at his home in Greenbrae, California in 2009.

Image: *My Mother Posing*, 1984. Archival pigment print, 40 x 50 inches.

For sales inquiries, please contact Matthew Whitworth at [mwhitworth@yanceyrichardson.com](mailto:mwhitworth@yanceyrichardson.com)

For press inquiries, please contact Alex Pigeon at [apigeon@yanceyrichardson.com](mailto:apigeon@yanceyrichardson.com)