

**First Museum Survey of Artist Alison Elizabeth Taylor
Organized by Addison Gallery of American Art**

Alison Elizabeth Taylor: The Sum of It to Include Large-Scale Pieces and New Works

**Exhibition to Premiere at the Des Moines Art Center in October 2022 and to Open at the
Addison Gallery of American Art in February 2023**



Alison Elizabeth Taylor, *Only Castles Burning...*, 2017. Marquetry hybrid: wood veneer, acrylic, pigment print, and shellac, 58 x 63 inches. Private collection. Photo credit: Courtesy Alison Elizabeth Taylor and James Cohan Gallery, NY

Andover, MA (June 2, 2022) – The first museum survey devoted to multimedia artist Alison Elizabeth Taylor, recipient of the 2022 National Portrait Gallery Outwin Boochever Prize, is being organized by the Addison Gallery of American Art and will premiere later this year at the Des Moines Art Center. Known for her daring and inventive fusion of the centuries-old practice of marquetry (wood inlay) with gritty and provocative subject matter, Taylor tells tales that are unequivocally modern. This exhibition will assemble dozens of works that chronicle her steady mastery of the now nearly forgotten techniques of this rarified medium and reveal her talent as an extraordinary storyteller and chronicler of 21st-century American culture.

A native Nevadan, the artist often uses her hometown of Las Vegas as a lens through which to examine contemporary American life. Juxtaposing the over-the-top and lavish connotations of this craft with dystopian images of blighted desert landscapes, anonymous subdivisions, glitzy casinos, and seedy cocktail lounges, along with their inhabitants, Taylor creates a tension between surface and subject, appearance and reality.

Allison Kemmerer, the Mary Stripp and R. Crosby Kemper Director of the Addison Gallery of American Art and curator of *Alison Elizabeth Taylor: The Sum of It* said, “Taylor repudiates the traditional distinction between craft and high art, transcending both marquetry and painting in these meticulously constructed works, which are as much about seeing as they are about making. Parallels can be drawn between the popularity of marquetry during the reign of Louis XIV—a time of pervasive class distinction and economic inequality—and Taylor’s deployment of the same technique to tell the story of late-capitalist America. The splendor of the shellacked wood invites us to consider the innate humanity of marginalized subjects we might otherwise overlook, as well as the too-often-ignored impact of a boom-and-bust economy on American life and culture.”

Alison Elizabeth Taylor: The Sum of It will feature approximately 40 large-scale single panel works, as well as a room-sized installation, that trace the evolution of the artist’s practice from early paintings informed by the grains and tones of natural woods to recent more vividly colored works that layer marquetry, paint, and photographic imagery to new and increasingly complex works inspired by the resilience of the artist’s urban Brooklyn neighborhood and community during the pandemic. Running through it all is a meticulous attention to detail drawn from direct observation that grounds her imaginative tableaux in reality and attests to her talent as an extraordinary storyteller and chronicler of twenty-first-century American life and culture. In our current moment of social and political upheaval, Taylor’s innovative work begs the question, What is “painting?” But in further insisting on our sustained gaze and empathetic study, it also brings new attention to the age-old questions: What *is* America? and Who are we? The most comprehensive gathering of Taylor’s work to date, this exhibition offers the opportunity to consider these questions as well as trace the development of her unique approach to painting as it continues to grow, provoke, and inspire.

Alison Elizabeth Taylor: The Sum of It will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication published by DelMonico Books and featuring essays by Kemmerer, *New Yorker* journalist Naomi Fry, and novelist Lynne Tillman. The exhibition will open at the Des Moines Art Center in Iowa in October 2022 before traveling to the Addison, where it will be on view from February 28 through July 31, 2023.

About the Artist

Raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, Alison Elizabeth Taylor received her M.F.A. from Columbia University, Graduate School of the Arts in 2005. The winner of the 2022 National Portrait Gallery Outwin Boochever Prize, Taylor also received a 2009 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award and the Smithsonian's Artist Research Fellowship Program Award. Selected permanent collections with works by Taylor include: the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Orlando Museum of Art, Orlando, FL; and The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH. Taylor lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

The Addison's organization of *Alison Elizabeth Taylor: The Sum of It* follows the Museum's curation of *Rosamond Purcell: Nature Stands Aside*, which will mark Purcell's first retrospective and will open in the fall of 2022, as well as the first retrospective of the work of artist Mel Kendrick, *Mel Kendrick: Seeing Things in Things*, which was organized by the Addison and exhibited there in 2021. These exhibitions underscore the Addison's commitment to advancing artists' practice and presenting their first museum retrospectives.

About the Addison Gallery of American Art

Devoted exclusively to American art, the Addison opened in 1931 and holds one of the most important American art collections in the country. Its collection includes more than 23,000 works by artists such as John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, George Bellows, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Jennifer Bartlett, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Kerry James Marshall, and Mark Bradford, as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Carrie Mae Weems, and many others. The Addison Gallery, located in a stand-alone building on the campus of Phillips Academy—a residential school of grades 9 through 12 in Andover, Massachusetts—offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs, all of which are free and open to the public.

The Addison is open to the public 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, and 1 – 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is free.

For more information, call 978-749-4015, or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org.

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