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**SFMOMA PRESENTS UPCOMING PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION
LARRY SULTAN: THE VALLEY**

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) presents *Larry Sultan: The Valley*, an exhibition of photographs by Bay Area artist Larry Sultan that looks at the transformation of middle-class suburban homes into stage sets for adult films. Organized by SFMOMA Senior Curator of Photography Sandra S. Phillips, the exhibition will be on view May 8 through August 1, 2004. A fully illustrated catalogue of the series *The Valley* will be produced by Scalco Press to coincide with the exhibition.

Featuring fifty-three large-scale, color photographs taken since 1999, *The Valley* engages many of the themes found in Sultan's earlier project, *Pictures from Home*, which was, in part, a photographic investigation into the meaning of home and family.

Along these lines, *The Valley* examines why the ideal of middle-class domesticity lends itself to a most curious form of appropriation—use as a setting for pornographic films. The project also questions the notion of photographic truth, a popular subject of inquiry for contemporary artists.

On recent excursions to the San Fernando Valley, Sultan noticed that ordinary houses in the vicinity were being rented for a few days at a time to be used as sets for adult films. Fascinated by this practice, Sultan undertook his current work not as a meditation on the morality or a sociology of pornography, but as an investigation into what home, work, domesticity, and suburbia mean when used as charged, symbolic backdrops for adult films. Sultan's complex photographs negotiate the boundary between fiction and truth—they take advantage of the seductive cinematic lighting, yet they also divulge the frayed edges of the set and the boredom behind theatrical personas. In *Suburban Street in Studio*, a familiar looking street of suburban homes is revealed to be nothing more than a painted stage set. In *West Valley #11*, Sultan focuses on an exterior wall with a grid of small openings, one of which offers a revealing peek at a reclining woman within. This ordinary scene, complete with the clutter of a roll of paper towels and a gallon jug of liquid, is dominated by a rich, golden light, adding an air of mystery to the photograph. In *Sharon Wild*, Sultan captures an actress in a moment of repose between takes. Sultan's contemplative portraits reveal the working actors behind the film characters in honest off-screen moments of hunger, ennui or fatigue.



Larry Sultan, *Sharon Wild*, 2001, from the series *The Valley*; Chromogenic print; Courtesy Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco and Janet Borden Gallery, New York

Phillips says, “Larry Sultan’s new work is visually stunning. Although nominally about the industry of adult sexual fantasy, the true subject of Sultan’s pictures is how photography is used in the construction of that fantasy—and how it can also function as a critical tool to dismantle those same illusions. Sultan is a leading figure in the Bay Area art community, both as an artist and as a teacher, and we are proud to present his thoughtful work at SFMOMA again.”

Raised in the San Fernando Valley, Larry Sultan studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, and though he has made Northern California his home, his work has consistently engaged the culture of Southern California. His first major work was a collaborative project with artist Mike Mandel, a book of appropriated photographs, *Evidence*, and a subsequent exhibition organized by SFMOMA in 1977. These pictures came from the files of government agencies, local corporations, and research institutions and, assembled in the narrative format of a book, produced a witty, provocative, and insightful look at contemporary American culture. In 1992 Sultan compiled the book and accompanying exhibition *Pictures from Home*, which approaches the meaning of family and home through the artist’s own photographs, extensive diaristic writing, family artifacts, and stills from his parents’ home movies. Like *The Valley*, the photos in *Pictures from Home* engage ideas of truth, fantasy, and artifice.

In conjunction with *Larry Sultan: The Valley*, SFMOMA’s Education Department will present *Staging Domesticity: The Making of Fiction*, on Friday, May 28, at noon in the Koret Visitor Education Center Lecture Room. In this slide presentation and gallery tour, Terri Whitlock, a curatorial associate in SFMOMA’s photography department, will discuss Sultan’s exploration of the artifice of photography and the construction of middle-class suburban identity. This Art and Conversation program is free with Museum admission. In addition, an Artist’s Talk with Larry Sultan will be presented on Saturday, June 5, at 2 p.m. in the Wattis Theater, followed by a book signing in the MuseumStore at 3:30. Sultan will be signing copies of *Larry Sultan: The Valley*, available in hardcover. Tickets for Artist Talk (\$12 general; \$8 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors) are available at the Museum (with no surcharge) or through www.ticketweb.com. The book signing is free and open to the public. Additional program information is available on the Museum’s Web site at www.sfmoma.org.

Larry Sultan: The Valley is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is generously sponsored by Viola McCusker, 2004 Carole and Robert McNeil Volunteer. Additional support provided by Jeanne and Richard S. Press, General Graphics, A&I Digital, and Lumiere Imaging.

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Hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 8:45 p.m.; summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day) open at 10 a.m.; closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day.

Admission prices: Adults \$10; seniors \$7; students \$6. SFMOMA members and children twelve and under are admitted free. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free. Thursday evenings, 6 to 8:45 p.m., admission is half price.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by MUNI, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans and Caltrain. Hourly, daily and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415/348-0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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