

Anton Kern Gallery

Margot Bergman

March 9 – April 23

Opening Reception: March 9 from 6 – 8pm

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to present Margot Bergman's third solo exhibition at the gallery, now bringing focus to the artist's collaborative paintings created between the mid-1990s and 2010. During this pivotal period of her practice, Bergman appropriated paintings that she discovered in Chicago thrift shops, and overpainted the strangers' works to create uncanny portraits. In hindsight, both the artist and viewer can recognize this series as an important bridge to her portraits of women, which have become the mainstay of her practice in recent years.

When encountering amateur paintings in a thrift shop, Bergman empathized with their creators; how they would have felt to see their work abandoned in a jumble and cheaply priced. After rescuing the works and enjoying their company for a time in her studio, the artist came to recognize that there was something contained in each one, waiting for her. A new creative impulse was unlocked. Where the former author's work ended, Bergman's began.

As is evident across the eighteen small-scale collaborative works on view, Bergman's level of intervention varies from canvas to canvas. In some cases she leaves the majority of the original work unaltered, while in others only a small area is still visible. Utilizing her exacting visual prowess, she repurposes representational objects within a landscape or still life, turning them into facial features. She deftly makes use of negative space too. Eyes emerge from flowers and a boat becomes a smile. Animals become humans, and humans gain an alter ego with a second face engulfing their own.

In *Ginger AI*, for example, a rendered three quarter view of a woman's face becomes the center of a double portrait, with Bergman's thickly-applied fleshy paint surrounding it with an additional pair of eyes, bright red lips, and cascades of orange hair. In addition to overpainting faces, the artist would find herself repeatedly masking out the shape of a rabbit. In examples such as *Peony* and *Chucky*, the outline of a rabbit crouched on its hind legs creates a window into the underlying composition, a floral still life, and a scene of a mother and son at the park, curiously shifting the foreground and background.

For over six decades, Bergman has operated as an independent force within the Chicago scene, working rigorously with limited feedback from the outside world. This insulation brought her focus to the interior, and enabled her to hone a sophisticated and peerless style. In the freedom of Bergman's compositions, one can sense a spiritual affinity with the breakaway 20th Century European art movement COBRA, or Art Brut. Her works possess raw unadulterated vitality, and

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Margot Bergman, *Ginger AI*, 2012
Acrylic on found canvas
17 3/4 x 14 inches (45.1 x 35.6 cm)

an embrace of pre-conscious or unconscious instinct. Bergman's painting process, automatically finding faces where there are none, is strange even to herself. Seen together, these psychologically stirring paintings are an expression of the lifelong search to understand the actors within her own psyche that shapes her experience of the world.

For additional images and information, please contact: press@antonkerngallery.com.

Margot Bergman has exhibited in solo and group shows in the US and Europe since 1970. Her work has been the subject of five solo shows at Corbett vs Dempsey in Chicago (2006, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2018), as well as a two solo shows at Anton Kern Gallery (2016, 2019) and Suzanne Vielmetter in LA (2017, 2019). Her work was also included in Body Doubles at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, curated by Michelle Puetz (2015).

Bergman's first institutional solo show in Europe debuted at the Museum Langmatt in Baden, Switzerland in 2019, and traveled to the Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany, later that same year. The accompanying exhibition catalogue, with texts by Britta Peters (the artistic director of Urbane Künste Ruhr), Markus Stegmann (the director of Museum Langmatt) and John Yau (art critic and lyricist, New York), is available at the gallery.

Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday
10am – 6pm

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