

## PRESS RELEASE

Wyatt Kahn  
Knots & Figures

November 5 – December 22, 2022  
Opening on Friday, November 4, 6 – 8 pm  
39 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012

Eva Presenhuber is delighted to present *Knots & Figures*, the gallery's sixth solo exhibition by the New York-based artist Wyatt Kahn.

A syntax of irregular, disarticulated, and structured forms typifies Wyatt Kahn's three-dimensional wall works, assembled into compositions as abstract as they are connotative. Consider *A Bar*, where geometries of semi-circular apertures, cut out of square enclosures, accumulate upon a dense surface, like seared-through coasters or half-empty glasses left in disarray on a countertop. Or *Untitled (Him and Us)*, which reprises a motif familiar to Kahn's lexicon—a vertical body articulated through the accumulation of a stack of thin, rib-like bands at its core, amplified, wrapped, even embraced by rigid U-shaped arms that lace over and under the primary ground. Anthropomorphizing metaphors arise easily, as he playfully straddles the line between geometric abstraction and figuration, between painting and sculpture, all the while intervening in each category's respective and entangled historical lineages and discourses. And then there are his titles: *The Girl with Hoops*, *Acrobat*. Kahn's syntax, articulated in form, is a grammar of signs within which language, too, plays an important role.

Take *Standing Bather*, an assembly of vertical edged columns staging a gathering of sorts—one that culls from the vast annals of art historical figures of the bather, only to render them here, unadorned, raw, unmodulated, as mere evocation. The subjects in this series, hinted at despite the seeming abstraction of Kahn's forms, are deeply embedded in fields of reference spanning art history, but also the everyday, the domestic, the personal, the imagined: *Acrobat* may gesture to Picasso's 1930 titular portraits of flexible figures contorting the human form into improbable postures, but it may just as easily evoke objects as quotidian as the step ladders in the artist's studio and home, to say nothing of the narrative possibilities that may arise from the conflation of both nouns. Kahn never altogether casts out the subject; instead, it might reappear only because abstract geometries lend it new form.

Indeed, through his elaboration of the shaped canvas—a project he has undertaken since the start of his artistic career—Kahn has taken a unique approach to pictorial concerns, refracted through a sculptural lens. If his work has evolved at the intersection of painting and sculpture, it has also, more recently, intentionally revisited both mediums as independent fields within which to reenact and occasionally expand on—the experiments carried out at their crossing. In *Knots & Figures*, a new series of oil paintings on canvas, elaborated alongside corresponding or related shaped canvases, compress the latter's dimensional play within a single pictorial plane. In their complex overlays of lines, forms, colors, and strokes, Kahn's oil paintings are like aggregates of the additive and subtractive procedures that inform his wall works, reverse-engineered to redeploy these operations in a purely pictorial register. Here, figure and ground hover and supplant one another fluidly, suspended at the surface that both recedes and advances in depthless space. With these forms' sculptural analogues in mind, for Kahn, painting can never reassume its static place as the medium of illusion, nor can it simply perform as the medium of flatness.

Unsurprising, but certainly not unremarkable, then, is Kahn's embrace of high-relief, nearly free-standing sculpture in a new series of small, cast bronzes. While his sculpture has taken monumental dimension in his 2021 public works commissioned for outdoor display, these new bronzes are less environmental than they are object-like, intimate, visceral even, in their literalization of the internal, formal relationships evoked in his "flat" wall-hung works. Endowed with volume and mass, these sculptures render plane and line in space: thin serpentine lines become intestinal conduits knotted and wrapped around a central, supporting shape defined through positive mass and cut-out voids. These are familiar staples

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of the artist's visual repertoire resurfaced, or reconstituted as more than, beyond, surface—a transposition that, across mediums, materials, supports, and substrates, adds yet another dimension to Kahn's ongoing project.

*Rachel Valinsky*

Wyatt Kahn was born in 1983 in New York, NY, US, and lives and works in New York, NY, US. Currently on view is his outdoor sculptures exhibition *Life in the Abstract* at City Hall Park in New York, NY, US organized by Public Art Fund. Recent institutional solo exhibitions include *Variations on an Object* at Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (Mart), Trento, IT (2016); and *Object Paintings* at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO, US (2015). The artist was also included in the group exhibition *Jay DeFeo: The Ripple Effect* at Le Consortium, Dijon, FR, which traveled to the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, US (both in 2018). His work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, US; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, US; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, US; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, US; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ, US; CCS Bard, Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, US; and Buffalo AKG Art Museum (formerly Albright-Knox Art Gallery), Buffalo, NY, US.

For more artist information, please contact Jill McLennon ([j.mclennon@presenhuber.com](mailto:j.mclennon@presenhuber.com)).

For press images and information, please contact David Ulrichs PR ([press@presenhuber.com](mailto:press@presenhuber.com), +49 176 5033 0135).