

Ellen Berkenblit: Norton

April 21 – May 27, 2023

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to announce Ellen Berkenblit's ninth solo exhibition with the gallery, spanning the first and second floors. This latest hometown presentation of oil paintings and gouache works on paper highlights the artist's continual engagement with the physicality of painting and her sophisticated understanding of color.

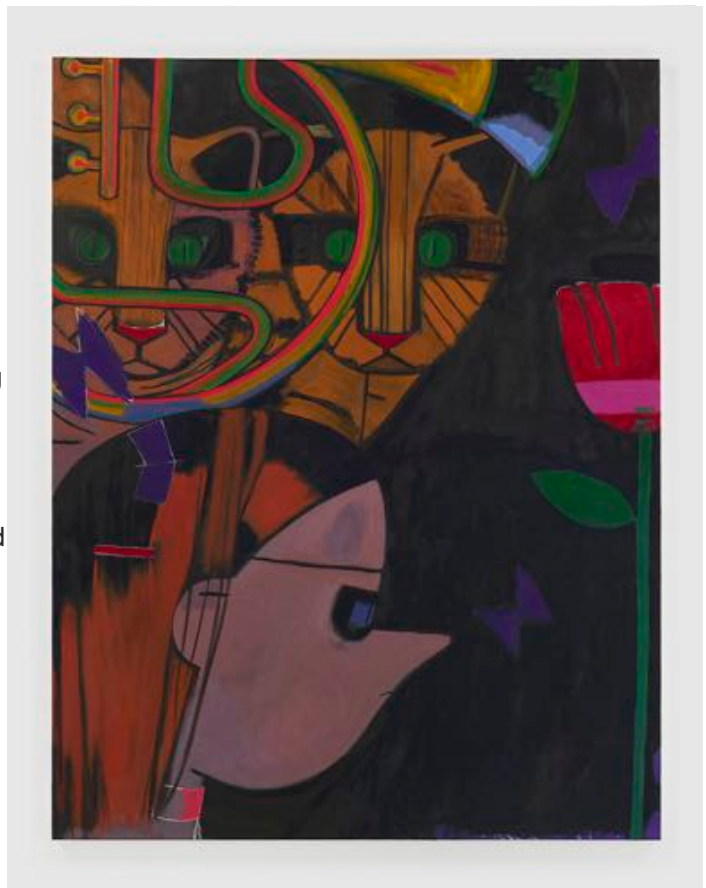
Positioned throughout the first floor space, Berkenblit's formations of figures in twos and threes stand watch with focused eyes, as if an unspoken mission is afoot. From painting to painting, there are continual leaps in scale and cropping, which keeps any suggestion of narrative at arm's length. A new alchemy in paint application is also at play: cadmium orange and neon purple scream through sheer earth tones, and innumerable shades of black create a complex atmosphere. These canvases are battlegrounds, with elements of their underlayer histories proudly laid bare. Berkenblit achieves a seductive balance between order and disorder, which makes her work endlessly engaging.

Upstairs is a series of new large-scale gouache on paper works highlighting the calligraphic quality of her line. Here Berkenblit's confident brushstroke is on full display. In contrast to the layered oil on linen works, the nature of gouache on paper necessitates a more restrained approach. The opacity and fluidity of the paint as brush meets paper gives the images immediacy. Formal similarities emerge amongst the female figures and peacocks, bulbous flowers and tigers. As quickly as they register as recognizable forms, they unravel into sequences of lines, shapes, and patterns that hint at the artist's unconscious personal code. *Beauregarde*, at over ten feet in length, is the single painting on view on the second floor. Holding the wall across from the works on paper, the viewer is offered a poetic juxtaposition in process.

Ellen Berkenblit (born 1958 in Paterson, NJ) is an American painter who lives and works in New York. She received her BFA from The Cooper Union in 1980. Her work is included in the public collections of the Aspen Art Museum, CO; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Cincinnati Art Museum, OH; Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME; the Minnesota Museum of American Art, St Paul, MN; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *Other Shapes at Night*, Vielmetter Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; and *Umberville*, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, IL (both 2022). Recent notable group exhibitions include: *Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts*, Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY (2022); *Judith Linares: The Artist as Curator*, Sarasota Museum, Ringling, FL (2021); *Reflections / Human Nature*, curated by Matt Black, Gana Art, Seoul, South Korea (2021); and *Just Connect*, MCA Chicago, Chicago, IL (2020).

In 2022, Berkenblit was awarded the Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Award in Art, which recognizes outstanding achievement in the visual arts (presented by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York). In 2019, Berkenblit was commissioned to create a site specific mural *Leopard's Lane* for the MCA Chicago's Atrium Project. In 2018, The Drawing Center commissioned the artist to create her first experimental film *Lines Roar*.



Ellen Berkenblit, *Wild Tulips*, 2023, Oil on linen, 102 x 76 inches (259.1 x 193 cm)