

# Anton Kern Gallery

## Brian Calvin: Onwards

February 22 – March 29, 2024

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to announce *Onwards*, Brian Calvin's eighth solo exhibition in New York. Spanning the first and second floor galleries, the artist presents 17 new paintings in a variety of scales, and 50 framed pencil drawings extracted from a 2022 sketchbook that he filled by making one drawing each day.

In *Onwards*, Calvin continues to dig deeper into the possibilities of figuration. His iconic longhaired characters alternately exist in flat color fields and descriptive scenery. Formal concerns are most succinctly elucidated in his tightly cropped compositions. In *Double Beat*, facial features are reduced to their essential shapes, and the convergence of multiple faces and planes disrupt one's expectations of a portrait. Color is at its most sumptuous and unnaturalistic. Large expanses of canvas are painted a solid hue while other areas are articulated with dots and dashes, patterns becoming worlds unto themselves.

Other paintings allow for more information while preserving a certain tension. By fleshing out the figures' surroundings, these scenes are suggestive of narrative. For example: in *Night Comes On* a woman sits at a table with an opened bottle of wine and gazes out the window into a starry night; in *Various Positions* two people carry an artwork to or from an unknown destination; in *Reception of the Transmission* the viewer adopts the first-person perspective of Calvin's protagonist in the midst of watching TV in a living room. In each of these cases, there is a halt in action, and expectant acknowledgement of the viewer, demanding response.

Doubling is a prevalent theme in the new works. A sun or clock shares a resemblance to an eye, and curtains to hair. Plants and candles echo fingers. A ventriloquist paints a canvas through the surrogate of his dummy. Paintings appear within paintings. The back and front of a figure are made visible through torqued over-the-shoulder glances, or in the reflection of a handheld mirror.

Upstairs, fifty framed sketchbook drawings line the entire second floor gallery. The drawings are presented chronologically – *October 28*, *October 29*, etc. – giving the effect of flipping from one page to the next. Various fascinations can be identified through repetition over several days, and motifs emerge and solidify. The inclusion of such a volume of drawings underscores the importance Calvin places on the activity of drawing within his overall practice. The diaristic presentation invites the viewer into the headspace of the artist freely generating ideas and refining compositional devices, many of which have been integrated into paintings dating from 2022 to present.

Coinciding with the exhibition is the release of Calvin's latest book entitled *Days* (Flood Editions, 2023). The book presents a selection of the pencil drawings from all four of Calvin's 2022 drawing-a-day sketchbooks. A book launch will inaugurate the opening reception, featuring the artist in conversation with writer and cultural critic Jennifer Krasinski.

Brian Calvin (born in 1969 in Visalia, California) is an American artist who lives and works in Ojai, California. He received his B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1992 and his M.F.A. from the The Art Institute of Chicago in 1994.

His work is included in the public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Portland Art Museum, Portland; the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach; and the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, Seattle. In 2015 his work was the subject of a mid-career survey exhibition entitled *End of Messages*, was debuted at Le Consortium, Dijon, France, and then travelled to the Mu.ZEE in Ostend, Belgium. In 2018, the artist was invited to create a special solo exhibition at the Met Opera, inspired by Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Recent group exhibitions include *The Echo of Picasso*, Museo Picasso Malaga, Malaga; *Marraige: From Antiques to Contemporary Art*, WHAT MUSEUM, Tokyo; and *Something Like a Self. Brian Calvin - William N. Copley - Karl Wirsum*. Linn Lühn, Düsseldorf.



Brian Calvin, *Night Comes On*, 2024, Acrylic on linen, 19 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches