

## ANTON KERN GALLERY

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### Brian Calvin

September 4 – October 4, 2014

August 8, 2014 – For his forth solo show at Anton Kern Gallery, Los Angeles-based artist Brian Calvin presents a group of paintings of faces, closely cropped or just of mouths and lips, as well as figures posing, some reflecting in a mirror. Calvin's severe framing, along with his carefully scaled compositions, creates a narrowing and fixing of focus. It shapes a sense of proximity and personality, infusing the work with strength of character and a jarring presence.

Calvin, who has gained a reputation as the painter of "pausing-as-an-activity," has over the last few years concentrated on painting isolated heads and faces. He has activated and intensified certain areas of the face while leaving others relatively calm. The focal point of intensity migrated from the eyes to the mouth. "I started isolating or focusing on the lips," he explains, "as a way of altering the context of the faces. When the viewer is confronted with *Lisp* or *Eternal Lips*, it changes the reception of the faces."



With minimal modeling of the facial features and backgrounds – almost touching onto a sense of Japanese allegorical flatness – the canvas is divided into clear shapes of sunlight-drenched colors, giving weight to the eyes and lips, revealing brushstrokes mainly for their chromatic values and occasionally for expressive accents. Eyelids are heavy under rainbows of eye shadow; irises sparkle and bounce back sky-blue, turquoise or sun-yellow reflections. It's the mouths though, the glossy lips, inviting and longing, slightly split open and revealing beguiling gapped-teeth, or an orange, oblong-shaped tongue, that are the most arresting in these new works. They seem to address the viewer, demanding his or her attention, requesting an immediate sensory response.

In a triptych depicting the actor Matt Dillon, right after the peak of his *Tiger Beat* moment, posing next to the artist himself and his wife Siobhan, the trio copies each other's attitudes and stance. Similar to the face close-ups, the viewer eventually loses sight of the recognizable (a pair of lips, a well known actor) and progresses into reading the painting as reverberating between just being paint and the works' suggested probability and verisimilitude. Despite their non-naturalism, Calvin's paintings become intensely believable. Calvin, the painter of the contemplative life, of paintings in which the figure appears as the non-figurative, makes the act of looking the inherent narrative. This certainly demands more of the viewer since the paintings refuse to offer any additional narrative structure, but then a reward is offered, a glimpse at unrelenting beauty, tenderness, and the timeless splendor of truth.

Calvin's work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions in U.S. and European galleries, and was included in such group shows as *California Landscape Into Abstraction: Works From The Orange County Museum Of Art*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA; *We the People*, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Project, New York, NY; *Dystopia*, CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France; *Electric Mud*, Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of the University of Houston, Houston (2009), *If Everybody Had an Ocean*, Tate St Ives in association with CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux (2007/2008), *After Cezanne*, LA MOCA, Los Angeles (2007), the *California Biennial*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA (2004) and *Dear Painter, paint me...*, at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, (2003). Calvin lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

\* A new monograph *Brian Calvin* published by Black Dog Publishing, UK, will accompany the exhibition.