

Anton Kern Gallery

Ellen Berkenblit

May 25 – July 7, 2017

Opening reception: May 25 from 6–8pm

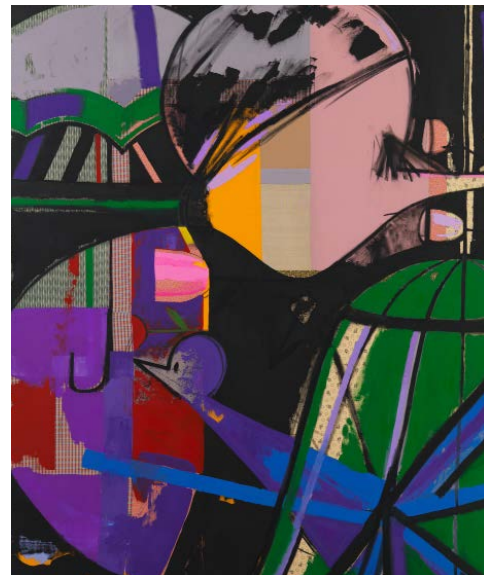
In her sixth solo show at Anton Kern Gallery, New York-based painter Ellen Berkenblit presents a new body of work that connects her love of textiles to her painting practice. The artist's clever placement of works across the two gallery spaces creates rhythm and drama throughout the exhibition, while still eschewing narrative. This new work bears the fluidity and confidence of a seasoned artist doing what comes naturally.

Time stands still in her quiet portraits of horses set against a black abyss. Suspense builds as nail-polished fingers prepare to pluck a single flower. The compositions reach a fever pitch as unruly girls stir up mischief with electric blue and green stripes. Having worked on these paintings simultaneously in her studio, one can see echoes of colors, lines, and curves that repeat, forming a signature that carries across the show. This powerfully feminine group of paintings create a mood that alternates between reflection and revelry.

Among her large scale canvases, the artist introduces paintings on calico, a floral patterned cotton textile that is a personally resonant yet commonplace material, which she discovered handles paint in a unique way. Berkenblit starts with pieces of calico, sewing one to the next in rectilinear swaths to create an improvised fabric 'drawing', which is backed with canvas and stretched onto stretchers. She then maps lines through spontaneous calligraphic gestures of her brush. Ecstatic colors gain form through the use of black, which alternately masks, defines, and amplifies shapes. There is a constant back and forth between calico and paint throughout the process; shifting surface textures and stitching interrupts brushstrokes, adding an element of unpredictability.

The artist does not approach a canvas knowing what the final result will be. She arrives at the finished work through a series of Freudian slips and visual plays that are mysterious even to herself. A birdcage becomes an umbrella, perpendicular lines hint at letters, a clock is buried under black paint. Elements plotted early on are unsentimentally scraped away in order to achieve the gut satisfaction when the puzzle fits together. Her unconscious vocabulary of images evolves as she responds from one gesture to the next.

Ellen Berkenblit (born 1958 in Paterson, New Jersey) is an American painter who lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received her B.F.A from The Cooper Union in 1980. Her work included in the public collections of the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio; Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Recent group exhibitions include *MCA DNA: Riot Grrrls* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2017); *GRIND, Various Small Fires*, Los Angeles, CA; and *IMAGINE*, Brand New Gallery, Milan. She will be included in the forthcoming group exhibition *Hope and Hazard: A Comedy of Eros*, curated by Eric Fischl Hall Art Collection, Reading, VT.



I Don't Object If You Call Collect, 2017, oil on calico, 88 x 73 inches.

Press Inquiries

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Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday, 10am – 6pm