

Anton Kern Gallery

Brian Calvin

September 7 – October 7, 2017

Opening reception: Thursday, September 7 from 6–8pm

In his fifth solo show at Anton Kern Gallery, the California-based painter Brian Calvin presents a new body of work featuring tightly-cropped portrait paintings, colored pencil drawings, and anthropomorphic wooden sculptures.

Among the new group of paintings, the artist introduces tondos (circular shaped canvases), whose cropping eliminates any sense of background or place, and underscores the flatness of his compositions. Also, for the first time at the gallery, Calvin presents sculptures: stilt-size painted wooden legs leaning against the wall, suggesting a group of idle teenage loiterers. The exhibition demonstrates the evolution of Calvin's reduced style of depicting the human form, and a looseness that opens up his pictorial vocabulary.

Through repetition of his archetypal female figure, the artist invites us to look past the inviting face we are confronted by, and consider the idiosyncrasies of his formal choices. By reducing the face to its essential features, and isolating eyes, lips, hair, each work offers pieces of a code for the viewer to interpret.

Oversize eyes gaze past the viewer. Lips are paused between forming words, revealing charmingly imperfect teeth and soft pink tongues. Faces are cropped and abstracted to various degrees, drawing attention to specific features. Mini landscapes appear in fingernails, the shapes and gradations in eyes and lips mimic sunsets over a horizon. Calvin's dreamy palette of pastels and ocean blues reflects the eternal summer of California and the sweetness of youth.

Throughout the exhibition, the artist presents exercises in seeing. He plays with doubling; hanging works that are nearly identical, but differ in terms of scale, orientation, or expression. Titles such as *A Gauche* and *A Droit*, *Inhale* and *Exhale* suggest opposites, sequences, or perhaps a duality in states of being. In *Sleeper* he places mouths where the eyes should be and vice versa. This simple inversion frustrates our instinct to rearrange the features, creating an exciting optical tension.

Calvin's work is asking, not answering, questions. Unconcerned with representation or narrative, the artist frees himself to meditate in the abstract activity of painting and explore the history of portraiture - from cave paintings, to the Renaissance, to the selfie - tapping into a primitive human desire to create images.

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 Art Institute of Chicago in 1994. He received honors in 2003 during his Californian Arts Council Fellowship with the Art Production Fund in Giverny, France. His work is included in the public collections of such institutions as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the 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 a mid-career survey exhibition, *End of Messages*, was shown at Le Consortium, Dijon, France, which then travelled to the Mu.ZEE in Ostend, Belgium. Recent group exhibitions include *Forest on the Edge of Time* at The Pit II, Los Angeles (2017) and *Los Angeles: A Fiction*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France which was first shown at the Astrup Fearnley Museet in Oslo, Norway.

For Immediate Release



Looking Over, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 108 x 72 inches.

Press Inquiries

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Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday, 10am – 6pm

Third Floor Gallery:

Mike Kuchar, *Drawings by Mike!*
September 7 - October 7, 2017

Upcoming Exhibition:

Alessandro Pessoli, *Against Me*
October 12 - November 11, 2017