

Betsy Kaufman
14 Sculptures, 1 Painting

February 26 – April 2, 2022



BLYP, 2021
Needlepoint wool, velvet, cotton or synthetic stuffing
25 x 13 x 10 in. (right); 15 x 9 x 6 in. (left)

For almost thirty years, Betsy Kaufman has created highly personal paintings and works on paper by subverting the minimalist orthodoxy of systems, seriality, and hard-edged geometry. A self-described “abstract expressionist,” she paints intuitively, with a lifelong passion for reading fiction underlying a process that she describes as “telling stories with surprises.” Emotional yet formal, spontaneous yet controlled, she uses color in a way that is as idiosyncratic as it is sophisticated.

In 2019, Kaufman brought her highly evolved sense of color and design to the practice of needlepoint, which she took up as a way to remain creative while relaxing in the evening. She began by sewing on small blank canvases that she later finished in the form of visually striking pillows. As she began to experiment with unconventional shapes and increased scale, she no longer saw her pieces as functional “cushions” but rather as independent objects in the form of soft sculpture.

In March of 2020, with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, Kaufman temporarily moved from her home and studio in Tribeca to live full-time in Upper Manhattan with her husband, the painter Mark Greenwold. There she found that needlepoint was the perfect alternative to painting, enabling her to pursue her longtime formal and conceptual concerns in a new medium in three-dimensions. She continues to work intuitively, developing the designs and choosing the colors as she sews, often removing and replacing whole areas of thread as the pieces evolve.

Kaufman’s ninth one-person show at the gallery includes fourteen sculptures made since 2020 including diptychs and single objects in a range of shapes and sizes. Works such as *Double Waivers* (2020) and *Stacked Purple/Green* (2020) assimilate the colors and forms of Kaufman’s paintings from her 2000-2002 *Waivers* series and works from 2000 that were inspired by the paintings of Clifford Still. *Pillars (After John McCracken)* (2022), the newest piece in the show, humorously riffs on the austerity of John McCracken’s minimalist *Planks*.

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The exhibition also includes *Ghosts*, a painting from 1992, that anticipates the double-edged playfulness of her newest works.

Betsy Kaufman was born in San Francisco and raised in the Bay Area. After earning a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, she arrived in New York in 1980 where she continues to live and work. She has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at museums and galleries in the US and Europe. Works by the artist are in the collections of the Sheldon Art Museum and the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, among other public and private collections.

Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects is located in Suite 411 at 401 Broadway on the northwest corner of Broadway and Walker Street in Tribeca. Gallery hours are Thursday through Saturday, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm and by appointment.

Masks and IDs are required to enter the building. Press 4 on the panel situated on the north wall of the lobby to access the next available elevator.