

Anton Kern Gallery

Brian Calvin

For Immediate Release

Waiting

October 29 - December 5, 2020

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to present *Waiting*, Brian Calvin's seventh solo exhibition in New York. Faces abound, energizing the first and second floor galleries with hyperbolic color, mosaic eyes, and varnished lips. The cool neutrality of their expressions brings an equal and opposite force; a stillness to the space. Otherworldly as they are, this group of 23 new works cannot be untangled from the time within which they were created. These paintings were born out of the global pandemic, which brought life as normal to a halt.

Life as a painter in Ojai, California, is solitary. The isolation of the Ojai Valley provides a lifestyle that dovetails nicely with Calvin's daily painting process. However with the forced suspension of his routine due to the lockdown, isolation took on a new meaning. It presented time to reexamine self-imposed boundaries in his work, including what it means to paint a figure.

Calvin turned a corner as he developed ideas for paintings in his sketchbook, giving himself permission to propose things in a picture that don't make sense. Activating techniques from synthetic Cubism, he played freely with color, texture, viewpoint, and plane, bringing spontaneity and urgency to his images. His newly unfettered imagery broke through naturalism and entered the unreal.

Time is at once objectively and subjectively measurable.

A person's reflection in a mirror is similar. During a prolonged period of precarity, the interior comes into focus and is ripe for distortion. In works such as *Delayed Reaction* and *Composite Sketch*, there is a sense of motion blur or double vision, each face having two cascading sets of eyes and lips. In *Composite Self* and *Passing Thoughts*, forlorn faces with five o'clock shadows (possible stand-ins for the painter) allude to mortality and the passage of time.

In addition to optical play, the viewer is also drawn to examine the relations of figures within a single painting. In *Waiting I* and *Waiting II*, groups of women stand still in an abnormal formation: their faces are in profile, yet their eyes stare out at the viewer. Anxious intensity approaches the brink of claustrophobia in *Committee* and *Goodbye Kiss*. Interlocking portraits such as *Full Circle* counter with balance and calm. Canvases split with dual faces resemble "best friends" heart necklaces, two complementary shapes that form a whole.

Through working in repetition to find multiple resolutions for an image, strategies become clear and then morph. With revisions in scale, color, and texture, Calvin's paintings become palimpsests of his own images, layered over one another, pushing through reason, leaving questions open-ended.

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.

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 *Drawing 2020*, Gladstone Gallery, New York; *Sympathetic Magic*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; and *REFLECTIONS II* curated by Matt Black, at the GANA Art Center, Seoul (2020).



Brian Calvin, *Waiting Woman I*, 2020, Acrylic on linen, 60 x 48 in (152.4 x 121.9 cm)

Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday
10am – 6pm

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