

Anton Kern Gallery

Margot Bergman

Brian Calvin: Early Work

June 30 – August 26, 2016

For her debut solo exhibition in New York, Anton Kern Gallery has invited Chicago-based painter Margot Bergman (b.1934) to present a body of recent portraits. Paired with Bergman's work is a selection of early drawings and paintings by Brian Calvin (b.1969), from the Popeye series created during his time in Chicago in the early 1990s. These side by side exhibitions depict the human figure and all its grotesque facets, and reflect the painterly Neo-Expressionist sensibilities of the Chicago art scene. With an emphasis on building up paint, working and reworking their materials, both artists create layers; Bergman in a physical sense and Calvin in a more figurative sense.

Margot Bergman builds layers of paint atop found artworks. The interplay between elements of the found works she exposes and her own additions creates distorted and uncanny forms, reminiscent of Modernist collage. Her constructed 'double-portraits' converge into a single subject. With titles like *Auntie Gladyce*, *Gloria Jean*, and *Patty*, each painting possesses a unique personality, a soul. This process of prosopopoeia stems from the artist's relationship with the found paintings, who she has "rescued" from flea markets and kept in her home. As Bergman explains, "It was a process - living with them, understanding what I was looking for, beginning to draw it out, slowly and without a plan, responding to the original paintings. I didn't know what the next step would be. Once I found my way to the portraits, it was magical for me."

When Brian Calvin moved from Berkeley to Chicago in the early 1990s, his predisposition toward painterly figuration was broadened through local influences such as the Imagists and the Hairy Who, resulting in a tonal shift in his painting. In his 'Popeye' works, Calvin renders the stark cartoon figure in thickly applied paint against a dark brooding background, paused amid mundane activities such as smoking a cigarette, standing in the rain, lying awake in bed. The contrast and stillness creates a sense of unease and focuses the viewer's attention on the subject's gestures. Calvin subverts Popeye's inherent cartoon lightness by reimagining himself in an alternate reality, restaging him in a bleak psychological landscape. With the memory accumulated from drawing this iconic character repeatedly in his youth, Calvin uses the figure's instantly recognizable shape, and its associations, as a vessel for ruminations on pathos.

Margot Bergman, born in 1934, has been an active member of the Chicago art scene since the 1950s. Her works often deal with the interplay between found works and her own painterly interventions. Recent exhibitions include *Body Doubles*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2015); *Unbound: Contemporary Art after Frida Kahlo*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2014); *INNER SIGHT/INSIGHT: Driven to Dare*, Governors State University, University Park, IL (2014); *Look at Me: Portraiture from Manet to the Present*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York (2014); *Dialogue Chicago: Taking Chances*, Noyes Cultural Arts Center, Evanston, IL (2013).

Brian Calvin, born in 1969 in Visalia, California, has gained a reputation as the painter of "pausing-an-activity," using a matte palette and skewed cropping in portraits, landscapes, facial features, and reflections that hover uncertainly between states of abstraction and figuration. His recent solo exhibitions include the mid-career survey *End of Messages*, which traveled from Le Consortium, Dijon to Mu.ZEE, Oostende (2015). Recent group exhibitions include *Wild Style*, Peres Projects, Berlin, Germany (2016); *About Face*, Kayne Griffin Corcoran, Los Angeles, CA (2015); *intimate paintings*, Half Gallery, New York, NY (2015); *Tracing Shadows*, PLATEAU, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea (2015); and *The Shell (Landscapes, Portraits, & Shapes)*, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France (2015).

Upcoming exhibition: **Jonas Wood** (September 8 – October 22, 2016)



Press Inquiries

Jasmin Chun
jasmin@antonkerngallery.com

Gallery Hours

Through July 2, 2016
Tuesday through Friday, 10am – 6pm

Summer Hours

July 5 - August 26, 2016
Monday through Friday, 10am – 6pm