

BULLETT

Girls Night Out: Ellen Berkenblit at Anton Kern

by *KELSEY SUNDBERG*

So you remember your last really late night out, where the memory of it resembles a pastiche of images stitched together, like serial snapshots? Ellen Berkenblit's show at Anton Kern is that night, featuring paintings that feel like dusk-y blurs full of color, ribbons, high heels, and maybe a little too much to drink.



Ellen Berkenblit, *Striper*, 2012, Oil and charcoal on linen
50 x 40 inches

Berkenblit's signature feminine-pop style, while lavish, spontaneous, and devoid of self-referential irony, is not without weight. The girls we see might be having the time of their lives, but viewed through the hazy lens of a morning hangover, everything feels too bright, and a little regretful. The visceral physicality of the brushwork reinforces that pang—the artist's hand and process is visible in the paint, which has been slapped on, dragged out, and scraped off. These touches, as well as the velvety blacks of the canvases, give depth to the pieces themselves despite the carefree levity of color and the almost maniacal smiles of their heroines.

While not quite a household name, Berkenblit was once enough of a downtown New York fixture for that a young Madonna once used her as an excuse to introduce herself to a stranger. She has continued to use the same language now. Her paintings are, and always have been, filled with recurring cartoons—young girls, ponies, starbursts—that portray Berkenblit's false naivete belied by a masterful technique.

Ellen Berkenblit at Anton Kern runs until March 31.