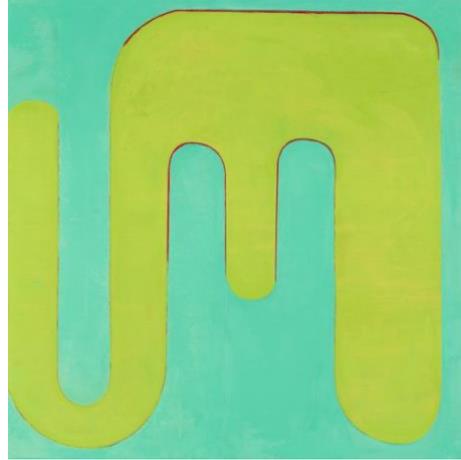


KATHRYN MARKEL FINE ARTS PRESENTS NEW WORKS BY ARTIST FRAN SHALOM
New York Gallery 529 W 20th 6W

***Groping for the Elephant* Features Thirteen New Works from the Acclaimed Painter**
On View from September 16—October 23, 2021



NEW YORK, NY, September 16, 2021 | Kathryn Markel Fine Arts is pleased to present *Groping for the Elephant*, an exhibition of thirteen new paintings by artist Fran Shalom. The show will be up from September 16th to October 23rd. The show is also accompanied by an exhibition, *Rough and Ready* curated by Fran with work by Sophie Friedman-Pappas, Rachel Klinghoffer, Cyrilla Mozenter, Helen O’Leary, and Cordy Ryman.

In a time when the world is in a bit of an ambiguous state, Shalom’s lush colorful paintings offer a point of discovery, exploration, and freedom as we try to make sense of the world. Shalom writes about her paintings that, “the shapes reference the human body but are open to interpretation. Animated by bright, cartoony colors and figure/ground relationships, I think of the paintings as ambiguous characters who inhabit my studio keeping me company and often engaging in silent, humorous conversation.” Shalom is not beholden to a set way of making, she relishes the freedom of the uncertainty in her work and what can be discovered in the process. This discovery is also open to the viewer’s interacting with the work, finding meaning, references in an abstracted space. We, as the viewer, aren’t necessary able to pick out exact references in the work, but we get lost in creating our own, which creates a very free and egalitarian experience.

The title of the exhibition comes from Shalom’s interest in the parable about the blind men and the elephant, specifically, how it is illuminated in Buddhism. This parable originated throughout the Indian subcontinent and the many religions practiced in this area have numerous versions of this story. Shalom references text about the parable’s intersection with Buddhism below:

The Buddha twice uses this simile of blind men led astray in early sutas. There have been many versions told and written about in early Buddhist and Hindu traditions and goes basically like this:

A king has the blind men of the capital brought to the palace, where an elephant is brought in and they are asked to describe it.

When the blind men had each felt a part of the elephant, the king went to each of them and said to each: "Well, blind man, have you seen the elephant? Tell me, what sort of thing is an elephant?"

The men groped about it. The first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said, "This being is like a thick snake". For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan. As for another person, whose hand was upon its leg, said, the elephant is a pillar like a tree-trunk. The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said the elephant, "is a wall". Another who felt its tail, described it as a rope. The last felt its tusk, stating the elephant is that which is hard, smooth and like a spear.

The men cannot agree with one another and come to blows over the question of what it is like and their dispute delights the king. The Buddha ends the story by comparing the blind men to preachers and scholars who are blind and ignorant and hold to their own views: "Just so are these preachers and scholars holding various views blind and unseeing.... In their ignorance they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling, and disputatious, each maintaining reality is thus and thus."

The Buddha then speaks the following verse:

O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim
For preacher and monk the honored name!

For, quarreling, each to his view they cling.

Such folk see only one side of a thing. (source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_men_and_an_elephant)

IMAGE CAPTIONS (L to R):

Fran Shalom, *Razor's Edge*, oil on canvas, 2020, 52 x 43 in.; *Clandestine*, oil on canvas, 2021, 24 x 24 in., courtesy of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts

MEDIA CONTACT

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ABOUT KATHRYN MARKEL FINE ARTS

At Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, we believe that significant contemporary art can be beautiful as well as visually and intellectually rigorous. We also believe that acquiring it should be a source of pleasure and self-discovery. To that end, since 1975, the gallery has exhibited a diverse group of artists united by hard-won craft, compelling intellectual framework, and a love of the art-making process.

<https://www.markelfinearts.com/>

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