



Kathryn Markel Fine Arts Marks 50 Years of Championing Women Artists and Expanding Access to Contemporary Art

New York, NY - July 21, 2026 - [Kathryn Markel Fine Arts](#) (KMFA), the New York City-based contemporary art gallery founded by Kathryn Markel, celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2026. Since opening in 1976, the gallery has built its program around women artists while championing unrecognized voices and making contemporary art more accessible to a broader audience. The milestone reflects the gallery's dedication to its artists and mission, its enduring vision, and its ability to evolve across five decades of change in the art world.

To commemorate the anniversary, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts will present [*Built To Last: Fifty Years of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts*](#), an exhibition featuring work by every artist currently represented by the gallery. For more details, visit: www.markelfinearts.com.

Founded in New York City in 1976, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts has remained remarkably consistent in one respect: Kathryn Markel has always trusted her own eye. Early in her career, after spending countless hours searching for artwork to match a client's specific request, she realized that approach rarely led to meaningful connections. Instead, she adopted a philosophy that has guided the gallery ever since: "I decided to sell only art I like."

That conviction shaped a program devoted to work that is visually compelling, emotionally resonant, and intellectually rigorous. Rather than asking viewers to understand a work through extensive explanation, Markel believes the strongest art creates an immediate response while continuing to reward deeper engagement over time. Her artists share exceptional craftsmanship, distinctive visual languages, and what she describes as a generosity of spirit and a "joie de paint."

For fifty years, that philosophy has sustained an independent gallery in the heart of New York's contemporary art world. From Midtown to SoHo, and for the past twenty-five years, in Chelsea, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts has maintained a presence alongside many of the world's most influential galleries. The gallery's recent expansion to two Chelsea exhibition spaces has created opportunities for generations of women and other unrecognized artists to present their work within one of the world's leading contemporary art districts.

From its inception, the gallery has been dedicated to advancing the careers of women artists. Women have comprised the overwhelming majority of the roster throughout the gallery's history, and Kathryn Markel Fine Arts has remained women-owned and women-led, reflecting a commitment not only to supporting artists, but also to fostering future dealers and arts professionals.

In an industry where countless galleries have disappeared amid economic downturns, shifting markets, and changing tastes, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts has endured by remaining steadfast in its mission. Rather than pursuing the highest-priced segment of the market, the gallery has built lasting relationships with artists and collectors who value living with original art. Markel has long believed that contemporary art can be serious, significant, and attainable - a philosophy that has enabled the gallery not only to weather periods of uncertainty, but often to flourish by serving collectors seeking meaningful work for their homes rather than investment assets.

“It’s been a fun 50 years,” says Kathryn Markel. “My career as an art dealer has been based on the premise that contemporary art can be substantial and rigorous, visually accessible and affordable. Any idiot with a million dollars can buy great art - the challenge is in buying art that a normal person will want to live with and can afford, that is, at the same time, serious and significant. I always said that the world did not need me to sell work by famous artists. There were lots of other people to do that. I like to sell work by artists who are alive and care if I send them a check.”

“In 1978, after graduating from college, I walked into Kathy Markel's gallery carrying a portfolio of watercolors. What followed is very likely a rare experience between a gallerist and an artist,” said Tamar Zinn, whose work has been represented by Kathryn Markel Fine Arts for nearly five decades. “I cannot adequately express how remarkable it is to have had the support of a gallerist who consistently believed in me. Over the years, I felt free to take risks in the work and follow it wherever it took me. Kathy's curiosity and enthusiasm helped make that possible.”

“After more than 20 years of working alongside Kathy, I am still inspired by her curiosity, commitment, and vision,” said Debra Marcoux, Director. “As the art world evolves, I think one thing will remain true: there is no substitute for experiencing art in person. That’s why we’ve continued to invest in physical gallery space and keep our artists’ work in the gallery, available for collectors to experience firsthand. Kathy has always believed in creating opportunities for artists to exhibit their work and for people to discover it. I believe that commitment will continue to define the gallery for years to come.”

In honor of this milestone, *Built to Last: Fifty Years of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts* will open on July 9 at the gallery’s 529 West 20th Street location. The exhibition will extend to the gallery’s 179 10th Avenue space beginning August 6. Additional anniversary programming will be announced throughout the summer.

ABOUT

Kathryn Markel Fine Arts is a contemporary gallery with two locations in Chelsea, New York. Founded in 1976, the gallery works with a multigenerational group of artists united by hard-won craft and the joy each finds in their studio practice. Their sustained engagement with formal concerns, the materiality of paint and a distinct visual language, results in work that is both visually compelling and conceptually sophisticated, a combination that has always driven our program and attracted the wide network of collectors and institutions we have been privileged to work with.

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