

KATHRYN
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FOUR DEGREES OF ABSTRACTION
A Group Show

June 21st, 2018 – July 28th, 2018

NEW YORK, NY—May 8th, 2018— Kathryn Markel Fine Arts is pleased to present *Four Degrees of Abstraction*, a group show curated by Anne-Brigitte Sirois.

Four Degrees of Abstraction brings together paintings by four artists working in various degrees of abstraction and investigates each artist's iconographic relation with nature. The exhibition aims to consider the hierarchical distinctions first positioned by art critic and champion of abstract painting, Clement Greenberg, who wrote in his essay *On Abstract Art* (1944), "Let painting confine itself to the disposition pure and simple of color and line, and not intrigue us by associations with things we can experience more authentically elsewhere... art that is representational too easily suggests narrative and thus panders to literature." Nearly seventy-five years and many waves of Clem-bashing later, the formalist perspective occupies a position at the zenith of the established culture, yet it remains a subject of controversy.



Suzanne Olivier, *Érosion du continent*, 2017,
oil on canvas, 40 x 50 in.

More often than not, “pure abstraction” is still revered as pedigreed over other branches of abstraction, whereas an abstract work containing any discernable reference to recognizable objects, any trace of the artist's individuality or personal “handwriting,” any reference to landscape or a horizon, any display of feelings or a philosophical outlook, any narrative or anything that could be interpreted as “content” reduces its “pedigree” to that of a mongrel.

Are these lofty rules and silent grading systems holding the evolution of the pure abstract style to a halt, where myopic attention to form is hindering an appetite for unedited expressions that do not preclude one's individuality, feelings and opinions? Sure, they are. The question is for how long? And through what fissure will the genre grow out of its confines? Who knows, but it sure is nice to consider this problem through the optic of nature and its implication within abstraction, any degree of it, and whether intently depicted or unwillingly implied.

- Anne-Brigitte Sirois

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Cora Cohen was born in Manhattan in 1943 and studied at Bennington College in Vermont, from which she received her BA (1964) and MA (1972) in Painting and Drawing. She presently works in Long Island City, New York.

“My work derives sustenance from the placement of culture within nature, as with the architecture at Insel Hombroich, as with the constantly changing active, unplanned energy moving through cities. During the past several years I have begun painting with that attitude.”

Morgan Everhart was born in Dallas, Texas, and studied at the University of North Texas and the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting at Maryland Institute College of Art, from which she received her MFA in 2016. She presently lives and works in Brooklyn.

“The first floral/still life painting happened in 2016 within a week of finishing graduate school. A painter friend brought over a bouquet of flowers and challenged me to paint them. I had a large abstraction that looked like an aerial view in the studio that I was having difficulties with. When painting the flowers, it felt very cathartic, personal, and universal.”

Suzanne Olivier was born in Montreal (Qc.), Canada in 1943. She graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Montreal in 1965. She lives in Ormstown, (Qc) where she keeps an active studio practice. This is her first gallery exhibition in the United States.

“Having grown up under the influence of the ‘automatiste’ movement in Québec, I was attracted to the spontaneous gestural approach to painting practiced by Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-1960) and his fellow artists who had signed the "Refus Global" - the manifesto calling for a more secular society. Over the years, as my pictorial language developed and my research intensified, I began to integrate elements of nature into my paintings in order to follow my own particular interests and establish my own particular style. This new approach transformed my work into imaginary landscapes, detached from both tradition and representation.”

Xiaofu Wang was born in Wuhan, China, and studied at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting at Maryland Institute College of Art, from which she received her MFA in 2017. She presently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

“In the movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, directed by Ang Lee in 2000, I was inspired by a scene where two characters are fighting in a bamboo forest. The fighter’s strength lies in obeying the properties and resilience of the bamboo. If the fighter’s force is not in harmony with the bamboo’s properties, they will break the fighter’s rhythm. I used these same principles while creating the piece; my painting was inspired by the physical properties of the bamboo as well as the fighters’ relationship to the bamboo.”

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