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CALLAN CONTEMPORARY
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JAMES KENNEDY *REVERENCE AND RIFFS*

OPENING RECEPTION: Saturday, January 7th, 6-9 PM
EXHIBITION DATES: January 5th - February 25th, 2023



Immaculate geometries and sumptuous surfaces meet in *Reverence and Riffs*, James Kennedy's fifth solo exhibition at Callan Contemporary. Kennedy's unique integration refutes geometric abstraction's tendency toward shapes and paint application that are severe and impersonal; instead, he imbues forms with warmth, sensuality, and luxuriant brushstrokes that offer generous evidence of the artist's hand. The exhibition's title references an homage to historical artists Kennedy admires, an acknowledgment of his own aesthetic evolution, and a sense of play and improvisation he achieves in compositions that seem to channel the intricate rhythms and lyric flights of a jazz riff. In addition to new mixed-media paintings on eucalyptus-wood Masonite, the show also includes a pivotal composition from 2010, *Pathways to Enlightenment*, which he cites as "a significant transition in my work from densely textured abstract landscape to spatial mode—a great illustration of the morphosis and source material for the paintings today."

Born in Northern Ireland, Kennedy has a background in theater, performance, and choreography in addition to visual art and earned degrees from the Royal Scottish Academy, London School of Contemporary Dance, and Rhode Academy of Design. For many years he was based in Manhattan but recently relocated his studio to upstate New York. His work has been exhibited widely, featured in major art fairs, and acquired into prestigious museum and corporate collections around the world, among them The British Museum, Corcoran Group,

Saatchi & Saatchi, St. Regis Hotels, and Nordstrom, as well as important private collections, most notably that of late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Edward Albee. He is currently creating a suite of paintings, curated by Simon de Pury, for The Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.

Built up from myriad washes and color fields, then incised with specialized tools to impart further topographical complexity, Kennedy's paintings have a translucence and tactility that impart extraordinary visual richness and nuance. Sinuous gestures are visible through strata of delicate glazes, allowing viewers to peer through the narrative of each piece's making. The paintings are birthed from a process alternately meticulous and spontaneous, resulting in finished works that strike an equipoise between balance, order, harmony, and organicism. Every line, form, and proportion serves a purpose that is both formal and expressive. The opposite of graphical, clinical, or industrial-looking, they are exquisite objects to be viewed in person, where their viscosity and luscious surfaces resplend. "There's a vibrational aspect to the work, a feeling of movement," Kennedy notes. "I create connections and a sort of tonal landscape in which they sit. For me that's the most important part of the painting."

by Richard Speer

CALLAN CONTEMPORARY hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10am – 5pm. For more information, please contact gallery owner Borislava Callan at Borislava@callancontemporary.com; Steven Callan at stevencallan@callancontemporary.com or TEL: 504.525.0518.