

## **Karla Knight: Road Trip**

May 20 - July 1, 2022

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present its second solo exhibition for Karla Knight, featuring recent paintings, drawings, and tapestries, incorporating her trademark ancient and space age imagery interspersed with the enigmatic characters that comprise her invented written language.

Knight was immersed in otherworldly pursuits from an early age. Her father wrote books about science, astronomy, and UFOs, and her grandfather conducted séances. She also developed an acute interest in the mystery of language, growing up with a mother who spoke German. As she recounted to Karen Rosenberg in a recent interview for *The New York Times*, witnessing her own son's experience learning to write was the genesis for the idea to create her own alphabet. "When you watch kids enter the world of written languages, it's fascinating. They start making their letters and then mess them up and make them their own." After a period of painting floating dimensional orbs in surreal landscapes, Knight began to assimilate a language of indecipherable letters and hieroglyphic signs into her increasingly graphic compositions.

Influenced by her years working as a book indexer, Knight's artworks start with cutting and collaging archival sheets of ledger paper. For her paintings, this foundation supports graphite, colored pencil, Flashe, and oil paint, then it is mounted on canvas or linen. At times, the artist uses a stream of consciousness approach, collaging hand-cut, typed out word combinations into list format, hearkening the American poet E.E. Cummings (1894-1962).

In 2020, Knight started a new series which she refers to as tapestries. Using 1940-50s grain or seed bags, she washes, irons, and stitches the fabrics together, and then applies acrylic markers, Flashe, colored pencil, and graphite and adds hand-embroidered motifs in select areas. The artist draws inspiration from Native American Lakota winter counts, specifically for their pictographic organization and spiral patterns.

The vibrant geometric outlines of her signature spaceships, fleets, and floating eyeballs waft over backgrounds replete with blocks of Knight's mysterious glyphs, echoing the automatic writings of mediumistic artists and the Surrealists. Her new work introduces more curvilinear forms, suggesting crop circles, medieval wheels of fortune, and mandalas, amplifying the mystical aspect of her art. Knight has even dyed some of her tapestries with a mixture of blue pigments, which Aldrich Museum curator Amy Smith-Stewart notes, "recall the sacred grounds of Persian prayer rugs, blueprints, and the periodic tables of chemical elements."

In the exhibition catalogue for *Navigator* (Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2021-22), Smith-Stewart identifies the push and pull between a scientific depiction and an occult presence

inherent in Knight's work. The recent compositions veer ever more towards the metaphysical, mirroring her early interest in the geometric visions of Hilma af Klint.

Knight remains purposefully vague about interpretations of her art. Ultimately, it is left to the viewer to determine the dosages of truth, emotion, and irony embedded in her oeuvre.

**Karla Knight** (b. 1958, New York City) is represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and Brooklyn Museum in New York and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, among other public collections. In October 2021, Knight's first solo museum exhibition, *Navigator*, opened at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut. She has been on residencies at the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo Corporation, and is the recipient of two Connecticut Artist Fellowships. The artist currently lives and works in Connecticut.