

'Artist's abstract paintings straddle in and out of reality'

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Courtesy Sandrine Kern

French artist Sandrine Kern will share insights about her recent paintings at an opening tonight, Friday, Jan. 24, for her first solo exhibition with Madelyn Jordon Fine Art gallery in Scarsdale, where her work will be on exhibit through March 7.

Born and educated in Paris, Kern received an MFA with Honors from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts.

She has been living and working in Brooklyn for five years, and has shown her works in solo and group exhibitions at William Shearburn Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri; Thomas Paul Fine Art in Los Angeles; Nikola Rukaj Gallery in Toronto and Gail Harvey Gallery in Santa Monica, California, among others.

The artist also was elected for membership in the Foundation Taylor in Paris, France in June 2016, and her work is found in numerous private collections.

Kern and Madelyn Jordon connected a few years ago when Kern was living in California. Jordon saw her work as part of a group exhibition and was immediately drawn to it. When Kern moved to New York she sent Jordon visuals and information about her work and Jordon was impressed with what she saw.

“I could tell that she had these beautiful, evocative paintings,” Jordon said, also describing Kern’s current collection as “elusive, abstract and evocative.”



Courtesy of Sandrine Kern

The exhibition introduces Kern’s unique paintings that integrate aspects of figuration and abstraction. At first glance, the works suggest traditional landscape, but the idea quickly dissolves into notions of abstraction as her indistinguishable, evocative settings are purposefully clouded or hazed to communicate a fading memory or transmit a feeling of a place that is imagined in the artist’s mind. Mostly void

of details, the suggestive representations are more of a symbolic reference — a tree here, a hill there, yet nothing is concrete, as if the image is straddling in and out of reality. Within well-worked fields of color appear sudden moments of clarity — a tree trunk, a lily pad — via gestural brushstrokes loosely defining a form. Often Kern will start with a landscape, sometimes from memories, photos, of visiting the physical space, and will

create the landscape only to then play with layering and transparency, taking a layer off or adding another.

“My paintings are developed intuitively through multiple layers with imagery that is revealed, then partially hidden, and finally transformed to imbue deeper meaning than representational depiction can express,” Kern said. Additionally, in developing these new compositions, Kern wanted to play with a new approach and more definition, experimenting with softer and warmer color tones, a direct departure from previous works that often employed more somber and moody hues. Kern said she didn’t want to create similar paintings in her collection, partly because she quickly gets bored of creating repetitive artwork, and she wanted to display “different and attractive” pieces.

Kern’s canvases of rich color are achieved through a singular and complex art practice. The thick surfaces of Kern’s paintings are built up with a combination of oil paint, oil sticks, pastels and cold wax which create a creamy, rich surface with an illusion of depth. The use of cold wax in her paintings blurs the line between oil and encaustic, allowing for expressive, textured brush marks. Utilizing plastic brushes, various other utensils and paper towels to move the paint around, Kern continually manipulates the surface through the reductive process of scraping away layers with a knife and solvents engendering a dense, subtle and deepening mixture of overlapping colors and shapes. The translucent quality of each painting allows light to pass through the layers of the matte finish paint. Kern explained that she wanted to tap into her emotions more in this collection, expressing these feelings as strokes or shapes.

Kern’s painting titles offer subtle clues as to the nature of her artwork. Titles such as “Sitting in the Park” and “When I Woke Up,” an Elvis Presley song, provide a glimpse of one inspirational source of her aesthetic. At other times, titles are less revealing. For example, the painting “Pink Daze” refers to her intimate experience of a hot summer day. In “Winter White Out,”

Kern's objective was to create a white painting, although the title refers to a winter storm. Artistic influences Alberto Giacometti, Édouard Vuillard and Nicolas de Staël are important to her work, seen in the dance between abstraction and figuration, and in her color choices. What brings these works together is that they capture something improbable that leaves room for imaginative connections to a mood of a past moment or an idea of a place — a halfway to reality.

Jordon said she hopes community members come to see the artwork and connect with Kern's paintings based on their own experience. Kern echoed Jordon's sentiment, and said she's sending a message, but she also hopes people can find their own message in her work as well.