AND THE
UNSEEN
COLORS
ERUPT
JEN PACK + MIKEY KELLY

AND THE UNSEEN COLORS ERUPT
Mikey Kelly
Jen Pack

AND THE UNSEEN COLORS ERUPT

SLATE contemporary's exhibition *And the Unseen Colors Erupt* (on view January – March 2021) features paintings by Mikey Kelly and textile sculptures by Jen Pack. While working in different mediums, both artists pursue the optical and emotional impact of color and line to create work that is, on the one hand, bright and bold and, on the other, full of both detail and minimalist restraint.

Jen Pack constructs three-dimensional forms from two-dimensional sheets of fabric, which are wrapped around complex sculptural shapes built of wood. One series involves sewing thin strips of fabric together in a process akin to quilting on an almost microscopic scale. Others stretch a scrim that is so sheer it appears transparent, allowing full access to view what is otherwise hidden: the wooden forms behind the surface. Delicate and intricate linear patterns of thread are set into the fabric with incredible precision, before allowing the thread to suddenly break free and take its own course. The basic element of thread is, therefore, explored in all dimensions: as a line, as a surface, and as something that fills space in three dimensions. The dynamic relationship between the heavy wooden structures that hang on the wall and the delicate fibers on the surface creates a wonderful dialogue, toggling between solid substance and negative space, tension and release, hard-angles and free-flow. The artist enjoys how this kind of play balances masculine and feminine approaches by challenging not only the notion of sewing as “feminine craft” but also the already ambiguous distinction between fine art and craft.

In Mikey Kelly’s paintings, space is more of an illusion. Made with hundreds or thousands of overlapping lines set at radiating and diagonal angles, these works can appear almost machine-made at first glance, and that assumption holds truth. Kelly has developed a methodology using poly-alphabetic ciphers and numeric algorithmic systems that allow language-based input to be translated into a directional code that dictates the angle and color of each layer of lines that make up a painting. Once coded, he simply follows his own set of directions, using a rig in his studio to position his straight-edge according to precise measurements and angles, having no idea how a piece will look until it is completed. In so doing, Kelly reduces the artist’s role to a set of preliminary decisions, e.g. What text will be put into the system? What language will it be in? Which ciphering system will encode it? Which colors will each number represent? Which materials will be used for the substrate and pigment? What kind of tool will he use to apply it?

AND THE UNSEEN COLORS ERUPT

When it comes time to actually execute the work, the artist himself is somewhat automated, run by the decisions he has already made and by the system of directions he has created. And yet, nature and humanity persist in the irregularity of lines made by a tool that is hand-held, in the moments when his paint pens or graffiti markers catch the nub of a coarsely-woven canvas, and in the emotional impact of the colors combined. Accident, mood, and process are also evident in the two sewn canvas pieces included in the show, which are irreverently irregular and sport a casual unfinished demeanor that is not found in his paintings.

While each artist's work stands on its own, the presentation of their work side by side highlights common themes. Both love bright spectral hues, while being equally comfortable taking pause in pieces that are largely black and white – proving that their materials and shapes hold up even without the delightful and sensational distraction of color. Both artists' work has a strong graphic impact at a distance, but reveals hours of labor and mesmerizing detail when viewed intimately at close range. Both follow systematic modes of working, where repetition of action accumulates to generate pattern and form. Textile and its textures are foundational to both bodies of work, as well. Jen Pack seems to favor fibers and fabric equally, using them as her primary mediums. Mikey Kelly has also explored the nimble and manipulable quality of fabric in his sewn wall hangings. Even in his painting, we see him honoring the natural and irregular texture of canvas by allowing it it to push through his paint; and he, as often as not, leaves exposed raw canvas borders on the finished work. While neither artist actually weaves, Pack's work relies on previously woven material; and, by taking it apart and reconstructing it, she creates a completely new fabric. Kelly acknowledges the woven canvas as a pre-existing fact, but the imagery of his paintings also creates an illusion of a weaving, with dozens of layers of lines going in different directions to create a dense web. Sewing is clearly more central to Pack's work than it has been to Kelly's, but the two wall hangings in this show do represent a direction he is continuing to explore and planning to scale up. Indeed, this sense of experimentation is perhaps what is most exciting about these artists' work. Having moved past the painterly tropes of pictorialism and expressionism, and having stepped across the borders that separate fine art from craft and painting from sculpture, it seems that the possibilities are now endless.

THIS IS
THE
FUTURE

JEN PACK

JEN PACK

Jen Pack's work has been exhibited widely throughout the United States. In 2020, she was honored with an exhibition at the New Mexico Museum of Art, who also acquired a piece from the show for their permanent collection. Pack was born in Oregon and spent most of her life on the West Coast, but she now resides in New Mexico. She received a BFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, and an MLIS from San Jose State University.

SLATE Art: What artists have informed your own art practice the most?

Jen Pack: I've long admired the work of some of the giants, such as Agnes Martin, Joseph Albers, James Turrell, and Judy Chicago. I like the object-ness in Eva Hesse's work and the scale of soft sculptures by Do Ho Suh and Janet Echelman. The exploration of cultural identity and loss through materiality in Do Ho Suh's work and other artists, such as Yinka Shonibare, particularly with fabric, is meaningful to me. I came across the work of Faig Ahmed – such an incredible push on the boundaries of traditional weaving practices! More recently, I've become interested in the spiritual explorations in the works of Agnes Pelton, Guo Fengyi, Delfina Munoz de Toro, Hilma af Klint, and even Carl Jung's drawings.

SA: What shelter-in-place activities give you some peace of mind and enjoyment?

JP: When the pandemic began, I started climbing the trees on the acequia irrigation system that rambles off the Rio Grande. I had been drawn to them and walk or run by them daily, but the pandemic has made the veil so thin and they drew me up in their embrace. I have been confused about the strength of this impulse and the timing of it. I can acknowledge that I need the kinship of their bodies, the tree bodies, and the contact they maintain to the other space. It is a difficult time to live alone and not have bodies to resonate with daily. These trees are ancient cottonwoods that reach as conduits from the dark richness of the earth to the luminous sky. They embody the unity of darklight. They are grounded, and they lift to the light. They carry energy knowledge within and are portals reaching for the stars. I sometimes leave gifts meant for the star children in the lumens of the trees. I make the frames of my artwork out of poplar, which I discovered are related to cottonwoods as members of the same genus, Populus. I suspect this is another reason why they feel like home.

JEN PACK

And the Unseen Colors Erupt (quiet enough to allow the blossoming of light)
2020
Thread on sheer fabric stretched over frame
29 x 59 x 4

SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

JEN PACK

Blossoming in the Dark (lightening myself into healing)
2020
Pieced fabric on assembled wooden frames
45 x 50 x 4.5

JEN PACK

High Condensation
2005
Thread on fabric stretched on wood frame
102 x 41 x 60

SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

JEN PACK

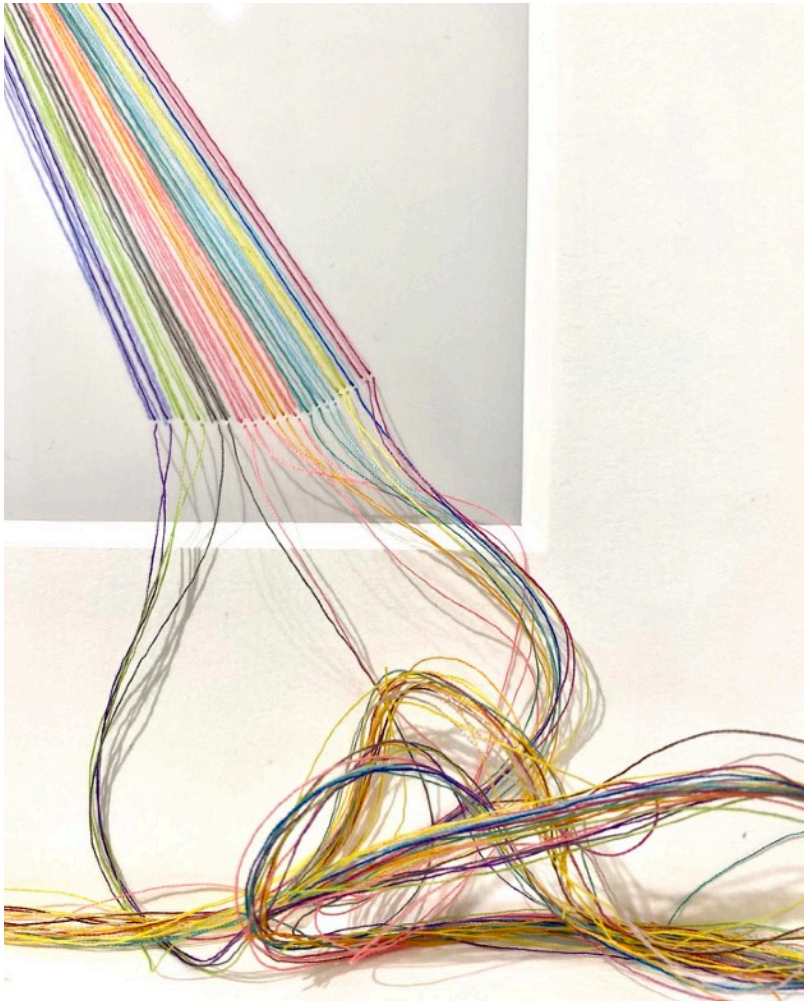
Piquing Blossoms (all the love and desire with nowhere to go sings a song of longing)
2020
Pieced fabric stretched over wooden frame
15.25 x 57 x 3

JEN PACK

Primitive Streak
2018
Thread on fabric stretched on wood frame
14 x 63 x 5.5

SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

JEN PACK



Place Yourself in the Void (it's not a void)
2020
Colored pencil and thread on vellum, framed to 17.25 x 14.25
12 x 9

JEN PACK

The Hard Edges Collapse into My(r)th
2020
Colored pencil and thread on vellum, framed to 17.25 x 14.25
12 x 9

SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

JEN PACK

CURRICULUM VITAE

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2020 *New and Recent Work*, Gallery FRITZ, Santa Fe, NM
2019 *Tethered Reflections*, Carneal Simmons Contemporary Art, Dallas, TX
2018 *Women in the Arts Solo Exhibition*, McCray gallery, WNMU, Silver City, NM
2017 *Resonant Fragments*, Carneal Simmons Contemporary Art, Dallas, TX
2016 *Irregularities*, Durango Art Center Art Library, Durango, CO
2012 *UnQuiet Chroma*, Taylor de Cordoba Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2010 *Subsuming Chaos*, Fort Lewis College Art Gallery, Durango, CO
2007 *Thought Forms*, 301 Bocana Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2006 *New Work*, Pulliam Deffenbaugh, Portland, OR
2005 *Extrusions,* Sarah Lee Artworks and Projects, Santa Monica, CA
ThreadWorks, Ampersand, San Francisco, CA
2003 *roygbp*, Gallery 364 Hayes, San Francisco, CA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021 *And the Unseen Colors Erupt*, SLATE contemporary, Oakland, CA
2020 *Art on Paper,* New York, NY
Constellations, Harwood Art Center, Albuquerque, NM
Alcoves 2020, New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM
Harmonies in Color, Louisiana Art and Science Museum, Baton Rouge, LA
2019 *Not Your Muse*, Liz Lidgett Gallery + Design, Des Moines, IA
2018 *CONTEXT Art Fair*, Miami Beach, FL
Contact: Local to Global, New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM
2017 *SCOPE International Contemporary Art Show*, Miami Beach, FL

JEN PACK

2017 *Future Fabrication: International Exhibition in Print*, Surface Design
Unfolding the Process, Carneal Simmons Contemporary Art, Dallas, TX
Female, Whitewall Contemporary, Delray Beach, FL
Fabricated, Cornell Art Museum, Delray Beach, FL
2016 *Trifecta*, exhibit by aberson, Tulsa, OK
The World is Flat Not Round, PHILSPACE, Santa Fe, NM
2013 *Juried Exhibition-in-Print*, New American Paintings: West No. 108
Perception: Color, Line, Pattern, Arvada Center for the Arts, Arvada, CO
2011 *Recrafting History*, Taylor de Cordoba Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2008 *Natural Cycles*, Art in the Forest at Tryon Creek State Park, Portland, OR
Blurring the Line: the Art of Thread, Pulliam Deffenbaugh, Portland, OR
Raw Boundaries, KN Gallery, Chicago, IL
2007 *Juried Exhibition-in-Print*, New American Paintings: Pacific Coast No. 73
2006 *New Lines: Drawn, Stitched & Sculpted*, Spur Projects, Portola Valley, CA
Momentum, Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA
2005 *Conceptual Craft: The Art of Textile & Fabric*, RPS Collective, Oakland, CA
Introductions, Pulliam Deffenbaugh, Portland, OR
2004 *Common Thread*, Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA

COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC ART

7/S Denver Haus, Denver, CO
AC Biltmore Hotel, Phoenix, AZ
Albemarle, Charlotte, NC
Capital One, Plano, TX
Facebook, Los Lunas, NM
Fine Art Collection, United States Embassy permanent collection, Accra, Ghana

JEN PACK

Private residence, Dallas, TX
Private residence, Saratoga, CA
Lenox Boardwalk, Austin, TX
Marriot Marquis, Atlanta, GA
Ocean Beach Project: Duneweed, San Francisco, CA
Pacific Investment Management Company (PIMCO), Los Angeles, CA
Bernal Hill Project: Thought Form, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

2020 *Review: Jen Pack*, Jacqueline Hirsh Greene, gallery FRITZ, April 14
9 Incredible Objects From Armory Art Fair Week 2020, David Behringer, Design
Milk, Mar 25

2019 *Jen Pack's installation for the Louisiana Art & Science Museum is a 'Chromatic Chorus' in thread*, Robin Miller, The Advocate, Sept 23

2017 *Jen Pack's Fabric Sculpture at Carneal Simmons Contemporary Art*, Modern Dallas TV, Episode 124, Oct 3
Jen Pack: Resonant Fragments at Carneal Simmons Contemporary Art, Todd Camplin Weekly, Modern Dallas, Sept 29

2016 *Jen Pack: Undisputed Queen of Fabric Based Art at Exhibit by Aberson*, Deianira Tolema, Arte Fuse, June 4
Appropriation and Authenticity: An Artist's Assessment, Jen Pack, Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture, vol 13, issue 3
Durango artist's unique artwork, David Holub, The Durango Herald, Jan 7

2013 *50 Shades of Chiffon*, Rachel Crabb, American Craft Magazine, Aug/Sept issue
Jen Pack's Fabric-on-Frame Installations, Larissa Greer, Beautiful Decay, Jul 14

2012 *UnQuiet Chroma at Taylor de Cordoba*, NAP Blog, Ellen Caldwell, Nov 6

2011 *Fabrications with Jen Pack*, New American Paintings Blog, Ellen Caldwell, Sept 7

2009 *Tryon Creek Installation*, Oregon Art Beat, Oregon Public Broadcast, Apr 23

2008 *Blurring the Line: the Art of Thread*, Bob Hicks, The Oregonian, Sept 18

2006 *Art Event Hits 20 Years - Latest lineup brings whalebones, chiffon and panthers*, Joseph Gallivan, Portland Tribune, Oct 2

2005 *Stitched Works: Tangled Threads*, Leah Ollman, LA Times, Aug 19

JEN PACK

2005 *Jen Pack and Philippe Jestin at Ampersand*, Barbara Morris, Artweek, Mar issue

EDUCATION

2008 MLIS, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA

1997 BFA, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA

MIKEY KELLY

MIKEY KELLY

Mikey Kelly is a contemporary artist living and working in Napa, CA. His work has been shown nationally and is included in public and corporate collections. Notable exhibition venues include the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Cranbrook Art Museum, and Crocker Art Museum Sacramento, among others. In addition to paintings, he also has a substantial body of work on paper, and has completed several murals and welded metal sculpture commissions.

SLATE Art: Are there any books - art or otherwise that have impacted your work?

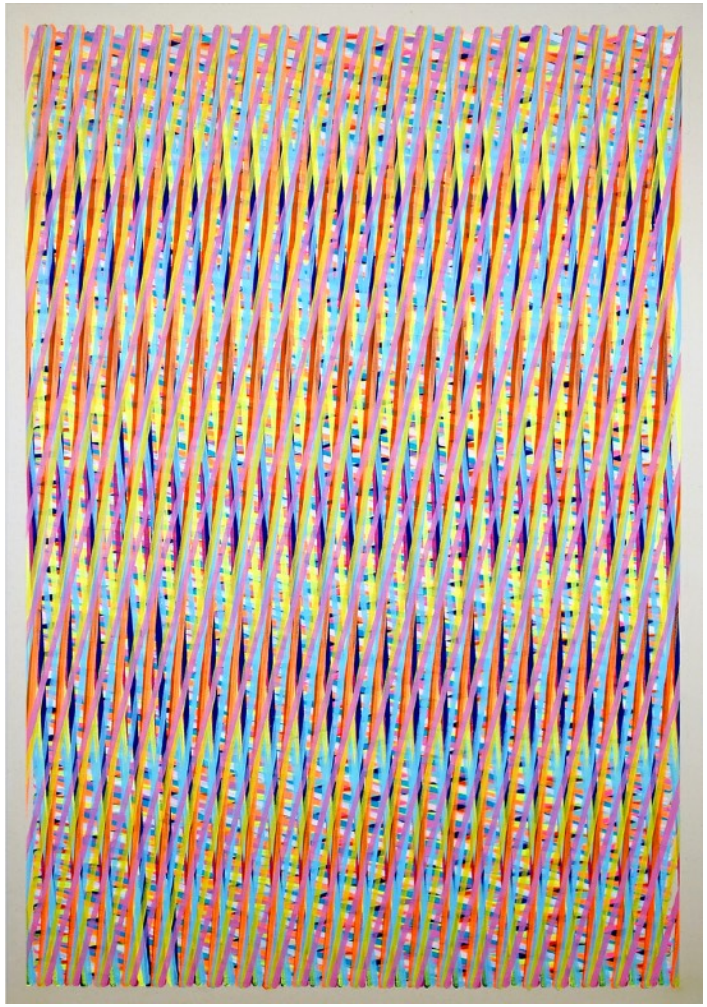
Mikey Kelly: I know this probably sounds like a cliche but a book that has had a profound impact on my work is Josef Albers' *Interaction of Color*. I was lucky enough during my eduction to spend time with an original 1963 silkscreen edition. The color theory that I learned through this book is something that has become ingrained in me and something I lean on when I paint. The resulting knowledge and confidence that I have in my choice and use of color has allowed me to base choices on feel and intuition.

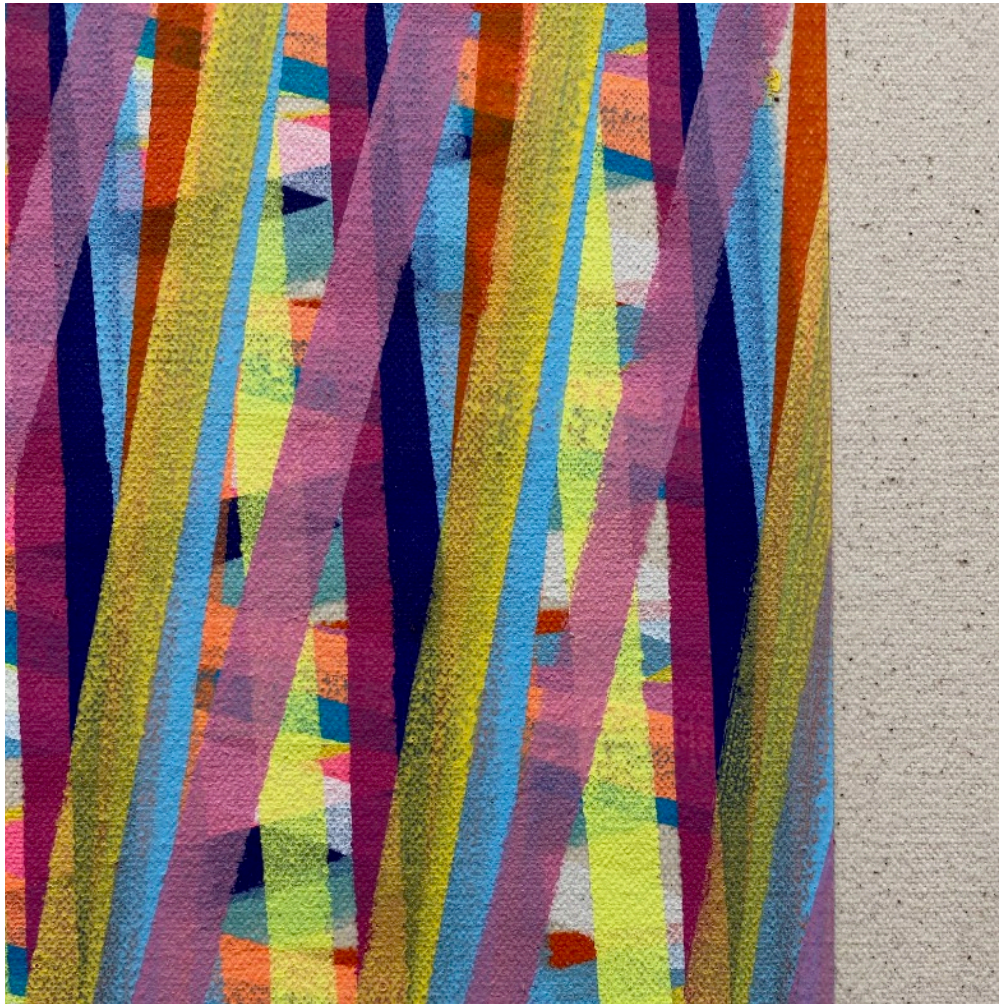
SA: Was there an artwork or series that was especially challenging for you?

MK: My process is constantly evolving, as well as my materials. So, I am always having to learn new skills, modify techniques, and refine systems with each new series of paintings. I enjoy these challenges and feel that this allows the work to take on a fresh look. For example, the latest work uses daubers that have a propensity for dripping if squeezed too hard. There is a fine line between squeezing hard enough to get the right amount of paint out of the dauber and making a mess.

Beyond the challenges I just described, there is one physical challenge that I had to overcome in my work. When I started with this field of work, I found that the peripheral optical noise created by the lines I was painting caused me to have migraine headaches. It took sometime to before my eyes were able to block out the noise and to just focus on the line I was painting. I am thankful that my work no longer gives me headaches and that my eyes have grown accustomed to the lines.

MIKEY KELLY

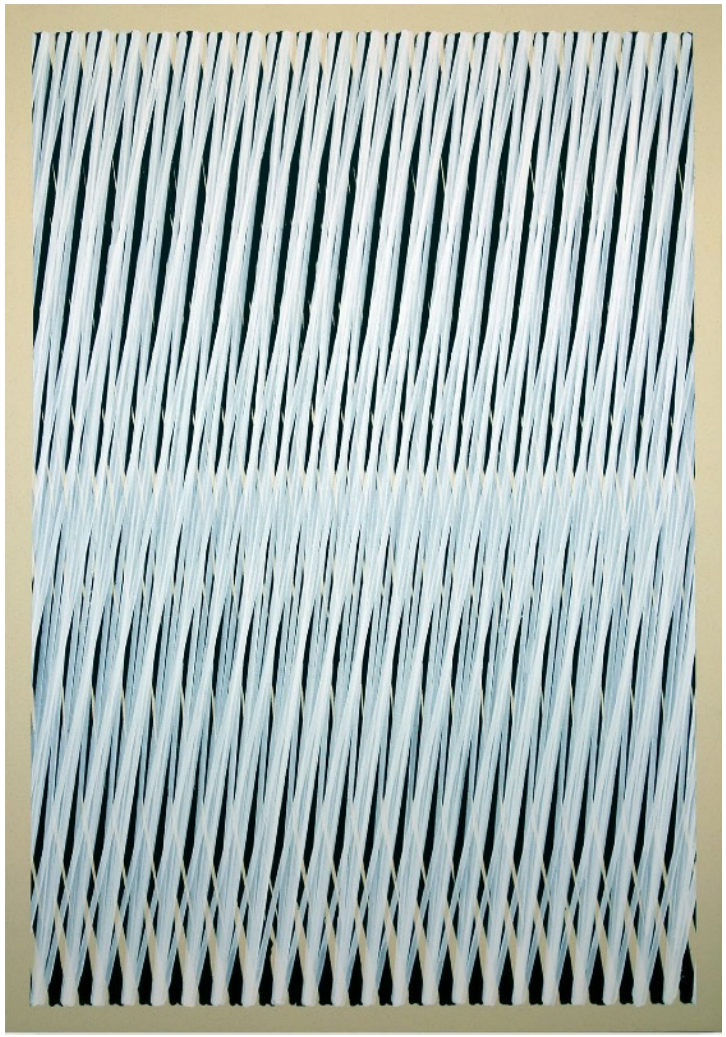




Bliss Calm Relax Serene
2020
Acrylic on raw canvas
72 x 48

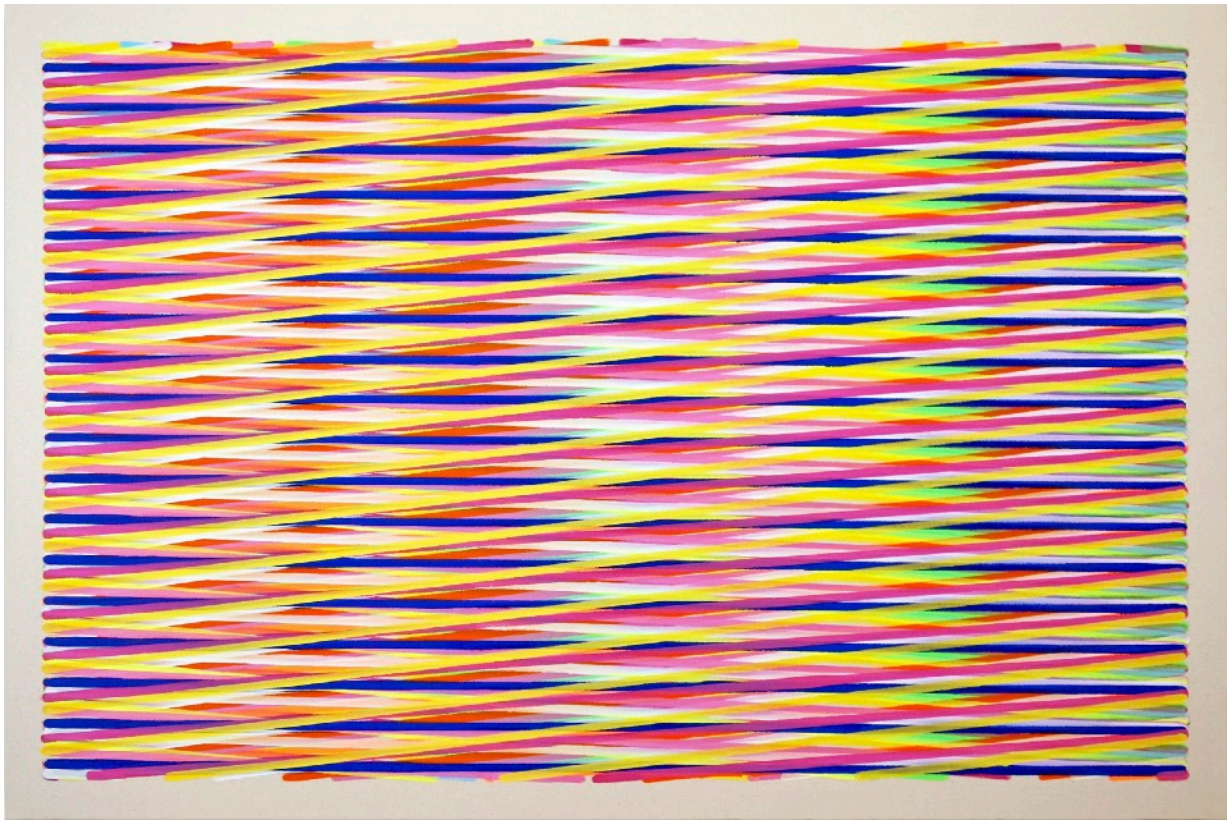
SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

MIKEY KELLY



Spiritual Purity
2020
Acrylic on raw canvas
72 x 48

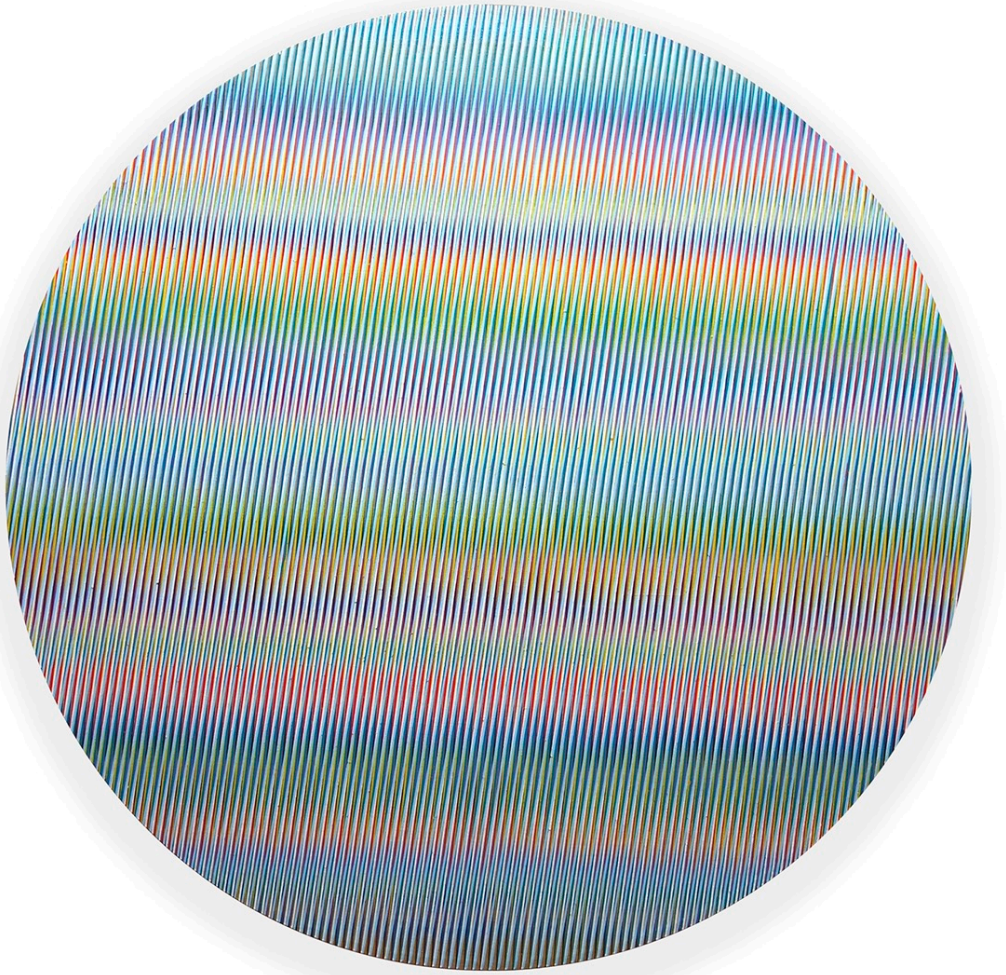
MIKEY KELLY



Ornamental Design
2020
Acrylic on raw canvas
40 x 60

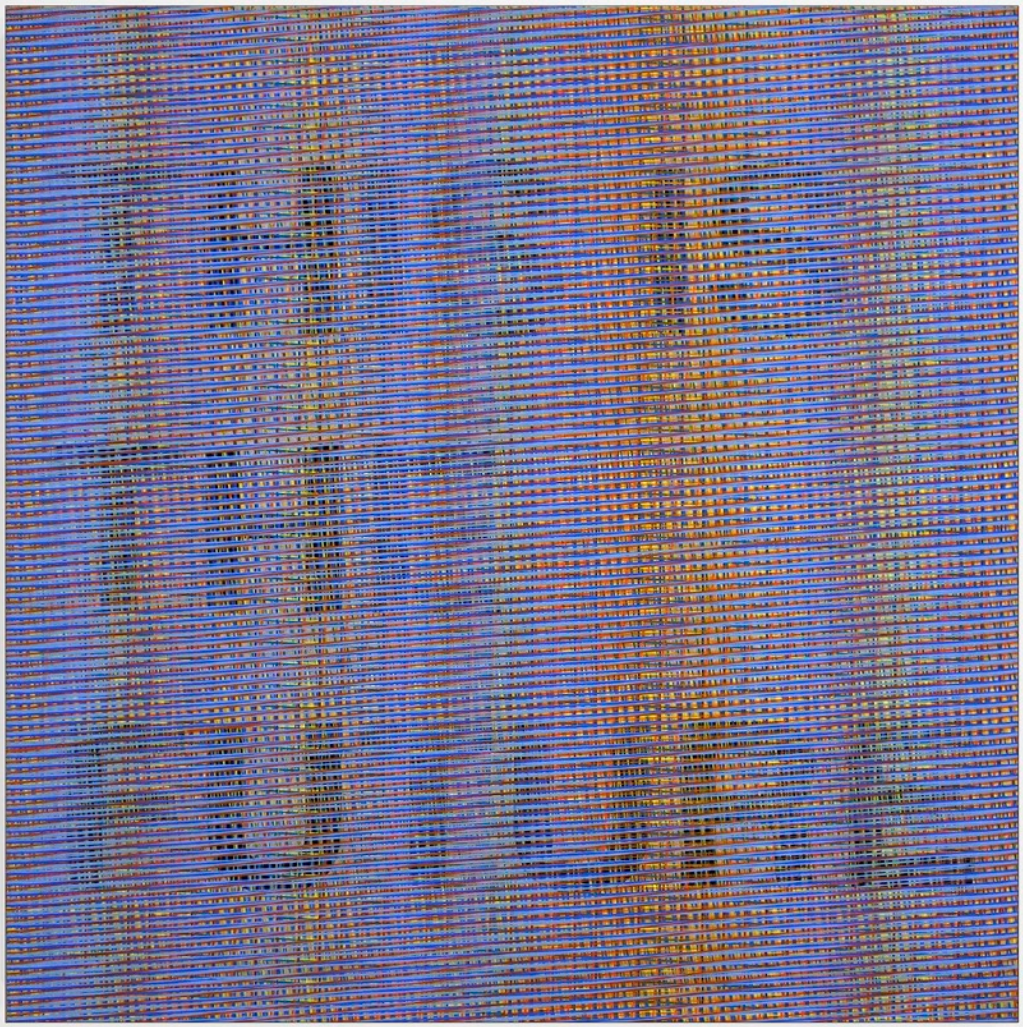
SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

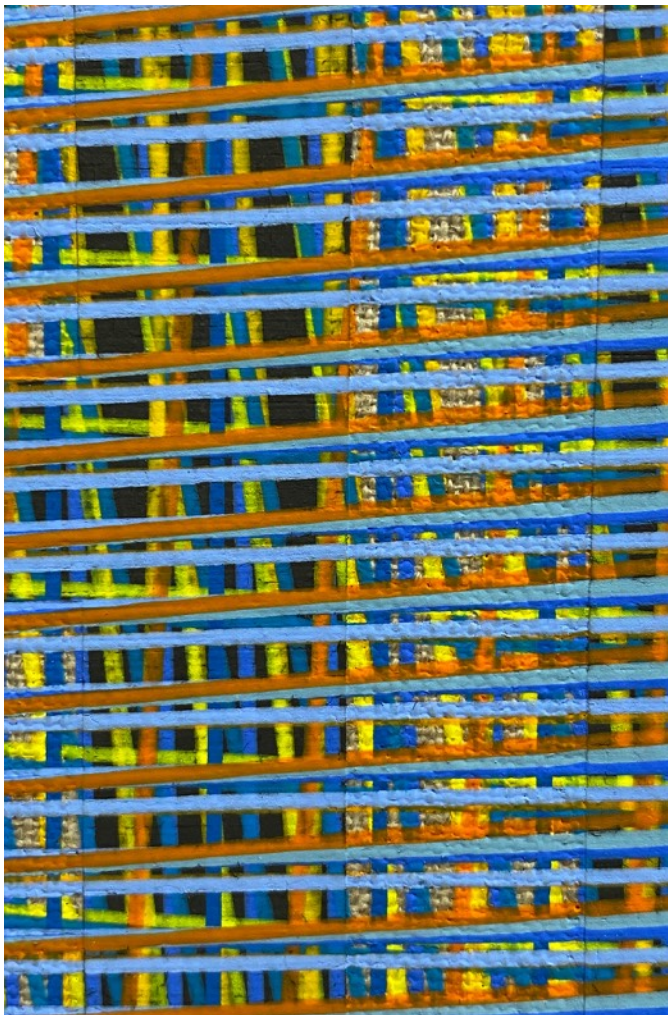
MIKEY KELLY



Pleasure
2020
Acrylic on linen
60 x 60

MIKEY KELLY

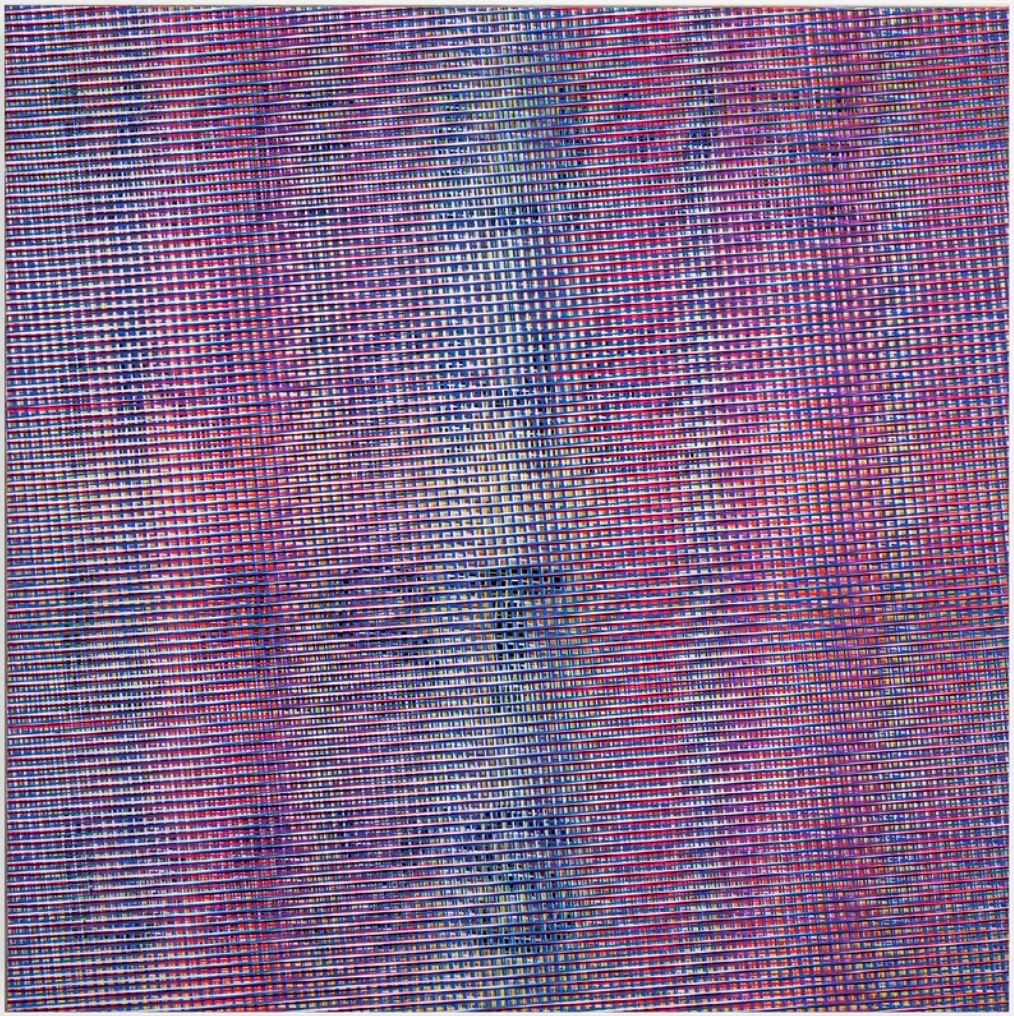


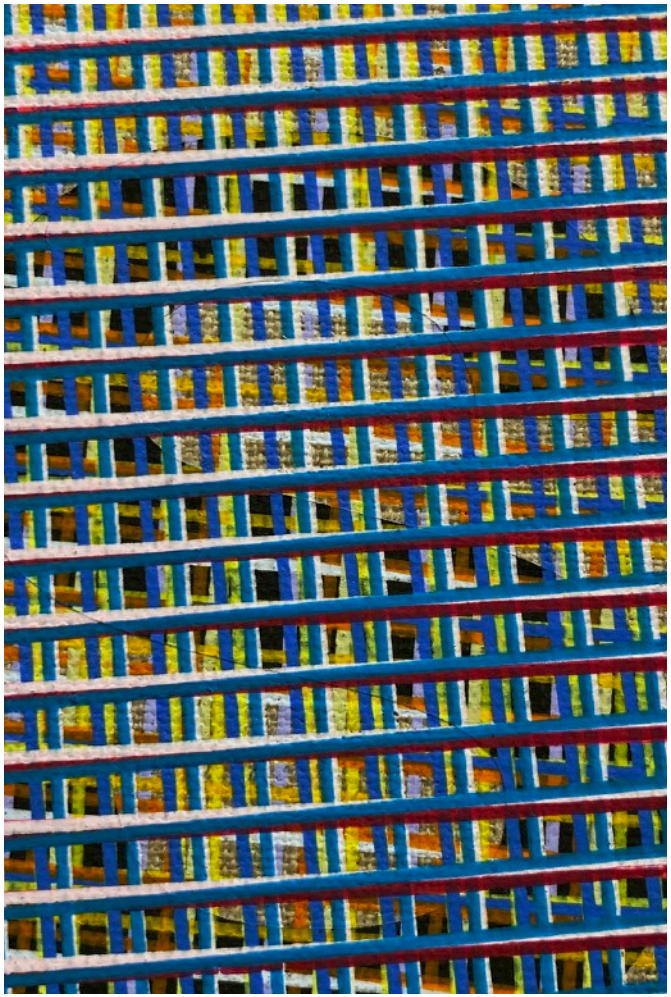


This Is The Future
2020
Flashe on linen
24 x 24

SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

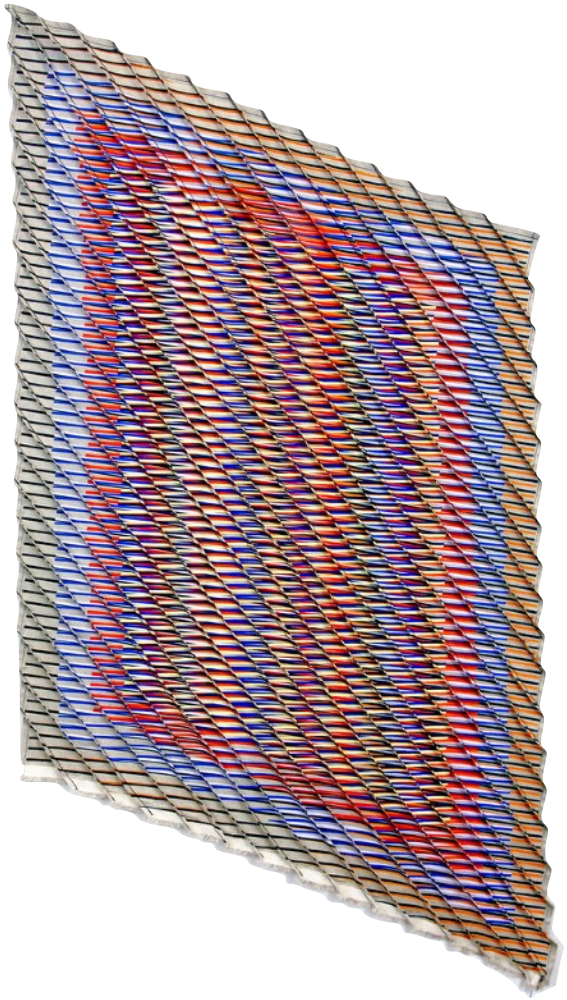
MIKEY KELLY





We Live in the Last Days
2020
Flashe on linen
24 x 24

MIKEY KELLY



Big Dreams
2020
Flashe on canvas, sewn
45 x 24

SLATE
CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

MIKEY KELLY

Paradise
2020
Flashe on canvas, sewn
28 x 38

MIKEY KELLY

CURRICULUM VITAE

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2017 *Vibrate*, Chandra Cerrito Contemporary, Oakland, CA
2015 *Slope*, Chandra Cerrito Contemporary, Oakland, CA
Mikey Kelly Drawings, Westin Versa, Napa, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021 *And the Unseen Colors Erupt*, SLATE contemporary, Oakland, CA
2020 *METHOD*, Incline Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2019 *California Modern: Works on Paper,* SLATE contemporary Hall Gallery, Oakland, CA
2018 *StARTup SF*, Art Fair, San Francisco, CA
Proto-Pop, Dab Arts H Gallery, Ventura, CA
Lucid Art Annual Residency Show, Gallery Route One, Point Reyes, CA
2017 *Crocker-Kingsley Selections*, Crocker Museum of Art, Sacramento, CA
Here, Part 2, Berkeley Art Center, Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA
Crocker-Kingsley, Coker Gallery, Blue Line Arts, Roseville, CA
2016 *Here, Part 1*, Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA
Artists' Annual, Kala Gallery, Berkeley, CA
2015 *Oakland Art Murmur Benefit*, Classic Cars West, Oakland, CA
Connect & Collect, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA
East Bay Open Studios, Guest Artist at Norton Factory Studios in conjunction with ProArts, Oakland, CA
Start Up Art Fair, Hotel Del Sol, San Francisco, CA. Juried by Janet Bishop, Cathy Kimball, Walter Maciel, Heather Mark, Paul Mullins and Hank Willis Thomas
Engage Art Festival, Artist in Residence, Celebrate Napa Valley, Calistoga, CA

MIKEY KELLY

2014 *Auction XII*, Root Division, San Francisco, CA
Sky, Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, CA. Juried by DeWitt Cheng
Impulse, Arc Gallery, San Francisco, CA,
2013 *Radiant Ruins*, Echo Gallery, Calistoga, CA. Curated by Ann Trinca
2008 *Everything Else*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
2007 *Automatic*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
2006 *The Literary Print in the 21TH Century*, Keller Gallery, San Diego, CA
2003 *Transformation*, Society For Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh, PA, Raphael Founder's Prize Finalist
Graduate Exhibition, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI
2000 *Salon de ICA*, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA. Curated by Todd Hosfelt

SELECTED PUBLIC ART

2018 *PARADISE, POW!WOW!AV*, Lancaster, CA Curated by Jasper Wong founder of POW! WOW! Workdwide and Andi Campagnone of AC Projects and Museum of Art and History, Lancaster, CA
2017 *Painted Poem*, First Street, Napa, CA Mural created using a spectral alphabet to convert language into abstract art.
Begin and Continue, City of Napa Corporation Yard Fence, Napa, CA

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Frankel Foundation for Art, Bloomfield Township, MI
Collection of Burt Aaron, founding trustee of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) , Franklin, MI
Cranbrook Museum of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI
University of Hawaii at Hilo, Hilo, HI

MIKEY KELLY

EDUCATION

2003	MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI
2001	Independent Study, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA
1996	BA in Fine Arts, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

SLATE

CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
+ ART CONSULTING

473 25th Street, Oakland, CA 94612
510.652.4085 | www.slateart.net