

BERGGRUEN

GALLERY

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CLARE KIRKCONNELL

January 10 – February 16, 2019

Berggruen Gallery is pleased to present *Clare Kirkconnell: Women's Work*, an exhibition of paintings by Bay Area artist, Clare Kirkconnell. This show marks Kirkconnell's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view January 10 through February 16, 2019. The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Thursday, January 17 from 5:00 to 7:00pm.

Kirkconnell's recent body of work emphasizes the artist's love of craft coupled with her exploration of female creativity and the feminine political voice throughout history. She writes, "My current work is focused on where we, as women, find ourselves today. Simultaneously, it is a form of tribute to the women who have brought us this far." Kirkconnell pays homage to these women through a series of paintings that are steeped in traditionally recognized "feminine" forms of craft while referencing culturally perceived notions of female beauty. Her work thus promotes the female voice by contemporizing traditional crafts while proudly emphasizing a personal and universal history of feminine creativity, political activism, and civic engagement – both then and now.

Kirkconnell's grandmother, a consummate craftswoman, instilled in the artist a love of craft that becomes the foundation of Kirkconnell's recent body of work. Years of knitting, sewing, crocheting, quilting, and weaving come to life throughout the paintings to create a coalescence of art forms, whereas Kirkconnell's works feature elements of textile and fiber arts, such as strong compositional grids, cross-stitching, and textural details.

Beyond their aesthetic principles, Kirkconnell's references to stitchery prompt a consideration of the historical narratives surrounding women's craft and political activism. The artist writes, "Throughout history, women have used stitchery to voice their opinions and make records. Early samplers and quilts often contained clues about their makers and the political and cultural conditions in which they lived." In particular, Kirkconnell recalls handkerchief "journals" made by imprisoned suffragettes. As women were allowed to embroider while imprisoned, they channeled their creativity to record their experiences, noting who had been jailed and the terms of their sentences. Kirkconnell writes, "The guards wrongly assumed that as long as their prisoners were doing 'women's work,' their passivity was assured. Little did they know that these small, delicate handkerchiefs would become significant historical records." Kirkconnell reveals a connection between these historical objects of female activism and contemporary avenues of female creativity surrounding the Me Too movement. In particular, the artist recalls the Pussyhat Project, which has become a powerful force of female activism while continuing the historical and political roots of women's stitchery.

As a former model and actress, Kirkconnell's early career instilled in her an acute awareness of perceptions of women as objects of desire. Expectations and opinions of female beauty in these industries - often linked to sexual desire and erotic undertones - are embedded throughout Kirkconnell's most recent body of work. Referencing key words and catch phrases, the artist uses specific examples such as the provocative captions of beauty products to propose a consideration of the existing associations surrounding female beauty. By bringing to light these pervasive perceptions through traditional forms of women's craft, Kirkconnell's work contemporizes the ever-powerful aesthetic, cultural, and political undertones of female creativity, thus prompting a reverence and appreciation for female artists in the face of today's political climate.

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Clare Kirkconnell was born in Brownsville, Texas in 1955. She developed an interest in the arts early on and continued her education at Palomar College in San Marcos, California. After college, Kirkconnell spent several years as a fashion model traveling the world from bases in New York and Paris. She concurrently studied acting, landing several film and television roles, including a three-year run as the female lead in the highly acclaimed drama *The Paper Chase*. Never abandoning her early interest in painting, Kirkconnell then continued her studies at Santa Monica College and Otis Parsons School of Design. Her work has been consistently well-received and can be found in many significant private collections. Kirkconnell lives and works in St. Helena, California.

Clare Kirkconnell: Women's Work, January 10 – February 16, 2018. On view at 10 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Images and preview are available upon request. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone (415) 781-4629 or by email info@berggruen.com.

Gallery Hours: Monday – Friday, 10:00am – 6:00pm
Saturday, 11:00am – 5:00pm

About Berggruen Gallery

John Berggruen first opened his pioneering gallery in the spring of 1970 on Grant Avenue in downtown San Francisco. Berggruen Gallery opened in its new 10,000-square-foot space at 10 Hawthorne Street, an historic three-story brick building across from the recently expanded San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, on January 13, 2017. The gallery specializes in contemporary art and 20th-century American and European paintings, drawings, sculpture, and limited edition prints. The gallery exhibits the work of major American post-war artists as well as established and emerging contemporary artists, such as Alicia McCarthy, Julie Mehretu, Richard Serra, Mark Tansey, George Condo, Bridget Riley, and Tauba Auerbach. In addition, Berggruen Gallery presents curated exhibitions of historic works by artists, including those of the Bay Area Figurative movement, such as Richard Diebenkorn, Nathan Oliveira, and David Park, as well as Alexander Calder, Willem de Kooning, Mark di Suvero, Ellsworth Kelly, Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ed Ruscha, Frank Stella, and Wayne Thiebaud.