

Mathew Cerletty  
True Believer  
November 12–December 23, 2022  
Opening reception: Saturday, November 12, 6–8pm

Karma, Los Angeles  
7351 Santa Monica Blvd  
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Karma is pleased to announce True Believer, a solo exhibition of sixteen new paintings by Mathew Cerletty. The show will run from November 12 through December 23, 2022 at 7351 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles.

True Believer means many things—unshakable sincerity, paranoia, or religious zeal. In this exhibition, layered connotations spark interaction in a dynamic group of familiar subjects. In works that range from near monochrome to painstaking realism, painterly craft overwhelms our sense of recognition and pulls us into a game of elusive meaning.

A red plastic gas can, perfectly lit, casts a warm shadow across a pale green surface that evokes the distinctive aroma of standing at the pump. The vessel, dropped asymmetrically to the bottom right of the canvas, bears the inscription Fuel 5G. In the velvety green embrace of New Leaf, we are confronted by seven feet of lush specificity. Resting on its tip, the oak leaf's frontal presentation intimates a more generic arboreal symbol or even the air freshener dangling from a rear view mirror.

In Ellsworth Kelly, Cerletty reverently depicts a stamp commemorating the great American painter. The words *usa forever* float along the stamp's wavy edge in appropriate recognition of Kelly's contribution and hinting at the country's fraught sense of pride. For the iconic *Pretty Woman*, Cerletty isolates the text as it appears in pink and yellow on the poster for the 1990 film. The artist describes his thinking:

"*Pretty Woman* is such an obvious cultural touchstone that pointing to it felt so absurd as to be almost daring, like of course everyone knows this movie! But those words on their own can seem charged, engaging the not always pleasant history of figurative painting in a surprising way. I get to paint '*Pretty Woman*' without painting a pretty woman. It's a complicated subject wrapped in a crowd-pleaser."

The chromatic array of *Plane Dealer* is another homage, this time to Brice Marden. "He's somebody I'd call a true believer," says Cerletty, "and I mean that with great admiration—he's romantic and open about painting. I'm more plagued by doubt, but artists like him make me want to let it go."

In the final work made for the show, the word *Heroes* hangs above our heads, curiously in quotes against a warm graphite gray. This time Cerletty targets the 1977 David Bowie album for painterly redaction. The simple gesture and bold composition completes the group with one last dangling thread.

As we drift from painting to painting—tracing a vibrant pattern, a repeating ellipse or an unexpected silhouette—connections vacillate and turn ethereal. We keep searching for solutions to a puzzle without edges. Cerletty doesn't provide answers but instead reflects our collective longing for clarity.