

Karma is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Ann Craven. This is the artist's first presentation with the gallery.

The exhibition is comprised of two bodies of new paintings: Birds and moons. Like much of Craven's practice, these works are both jubilant acts of art making and ruminative meditations on time and the nature of memory, or what Craven terms "the continuous just past."

Craven began painting birds in 1997, and, since 2002, has completed a cycle of works every year. All her birds, including the yellow, pink, and blue canaries present here, are all based on images from a single book, which Craven returns to as both a grounding source and a launchpad for inspiration. The 2018 paintings, are comprised of variable bands of color, like sunsets, which ground both her subject and the viewer in lush hues. When flowers emerge, they are often taken from one of Craven's art historical inspirations, Georgia O'Keefe. For Craven, her bird paintings have totemic power: each is unique but each is also a stand-in for the people and scenarios she might have painted, were she a portrait painter. They embody memories, and offer a chance for the artist to covet her artistic history while encoding it with her current inner-life.

If the birds are an act of meditation on a mediated image, then Craven's continuum of moon paintings, initiated in 1995, are a celestial diary. She paints them at night with just a small lantern, barely able to see her tools. And so her palette is set up, from left to right, with white, yellow, orange, red, cobalt blue, green, brown, and black, so that she can stay focused entirely on her subject and paint from instinct. As she told Dana Miller, "Because I have painted with oils (from observation) since a child, with the colors on the palette laid out for mixing in the same order forever, the mixed color is like a non-thought—it's like breathing for me—it just occurs because it's supposed to. Meaning I mix color with the same innate sensibility as I use to walk or breathe." These direct paintings then become sources for larger paintings, in which she can focus on the conscious act of rendering a subject and the remembering of a memory. In this way, as with her canaries, Craven both holds on to her past and expands her present.

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