

March Avery, Who We Are
17 September – 8 December 2022

Larkin Erdmann Gallery is pleased to present *March Avery, Who We Are*, the gallery's first exhibition of works by the American artist March Avery (*1932) and her first exhibition in mainland Europe.

Comprising oil on canvas paintings ranging from the mid-1960s up until the present day, *March Avery, Who We Are* aims to offer an intimate insight into Avery's practice as a painter throughout six decades of her career. March Avery draws inspiration for her paintings from scenes of her life, where her models were often her friends and family, including her son Sean, and through her paintings we see life as through her eyes. At first glance, Avery's works are distinguished by their shared colour palette – fluorescent and vibrant yet muted and highly sensitive all at the same time. There is a no-nonsense approach to compositions and subject matter: as Avery herself said, 'I paint what's available, if there were no people, I'd do more still lifes'.

While Avery's work is openly straightforward, it is never blunt or heavy-handed. Instead, her observations, expressed quite harmoniously onto canvas, are quietly intimate and exude an innate intuition for details. Sensitive and subtle moments, such as the peaceful smile of the female figure in *Molly and Friends*, 1968, who looks kindly directly at the viewer as she nestles into a comfortable looking sofa, exuding contentment against the plain, simple swaths of colour which make up the abstracted settings for most of Avery's figures. It is her ability to highlight these details and bring them to life in such an honest and empathic way that is central to the appeal and indeed the charisma that Avery's work holds. The simple, reduced setting in paintings such as *Quiet Conversation*, 2020, in which two figures seated on the shore of a cove are viewed from some distance, still manages to exude peacefulness and tranquility despite the figures appearing to look away from one another. More than what we see, what we feel from within this work is that easy familiarity that occurs between friends or family who have known each other so long that silence is comfortable and who we are when we are with them.

Rather than displacing Avery's figures into the unknown, the distinctive planes of colour in Avery's work serve to ground them, encapsulating them within serene colour fields. Certain colour choices, for example figures in blue or skies in lilac, appear as natural and obvious choices rather than misplaced, and while certainly not true to life there is no leaning toward the surreal or the fantasy. Such is the effect that even *Nude and Mirror*, 1967, *Relaxing Man and Cat*, 1969, and *Blue Sun Worshipers*, 1983, Avery has achieved a palpable feeling of warmth from within a palette entirely derived of blues, greys and brown tones. Here too, the details in the painting spring to the forefront and become fact, overriding any tendency to look at the work as anything less than making perfect sense.

Avery was born in 1932 in New York into a family of artists and, while she studied Philosophy at Barnard College, she always knew she would be an artist. Together with her parents, renowned painters Milton Avery and Sally Michel, the family staged group exhibitions during her formative years which allowed March to develop her painterly style. The family travelled extensively together throughout their summers, where in each location they painted with a quotidian solidarity – whether this be in the mountains or by the beach. Through her father Milton Avery, March Avery's early environment saw her closely acquainted with Mark Rothko, Barnett Newmann and Marsden Hartley, who were greatly influenced by her father's work. Whilst her own artworks bear reference to certain characteristics of what has been referred to by art historians as the Avery 'family style' featuring simplified forms and flat, almost two-dimensional planes, March Avery's paintings stand alone, individually distinguished by her mastery of colour tones and palettes and the strong emotional depth and directness of her composition and subject matter.

March Avery, Who We Are is open 17 September through 8 December 2022 at Larkin Erdmann Gallery, Rämistrasse 30, 8001 Zürich. The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue featuring a text by Katy Hessel.

March Avery (*1932) lives and works in New York. Her work is represented in public collections including the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME; Long Island Museum of American Art, History & Carriages, Stony Brook, NY; Newark Museum of Art, Newark, NJ; New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; Woodstock Artists Association & Museum, Woodstock, NY; among others.