

## Press Release

Judith Bernstein  
**GASLIGHTING UNIVERSE**  
13 April – 14 May 2022  
Opening Tuesday, 12 April 2022, 6 – 8 pm

In her exhibition *GASLIGHTING UNIVERSE*, Judith Bernstein presents a series of paintings and drawings that represent the culmination of over a half-century's commitment to confronting the injustices of power and politics within a sexual lens. Exhibited at Karma International, these explosive works include the artist's signature use of fluorescent paint enhanced by blacklight, as well as historic drawings beginning with her iconic "Fuck Vietnam" series from the 1960s. Her latest "Gaslighting Universe" paintings in this exhibition (2021-2022) represent the third phase in her trilogy of universes, following her "Birth Universe" and "Death Universe" series. This is Bernstein's fifth exhibition at Karma International.

"Gaslighting" is a term coined by the 1944 thriller "Gaslight," featuring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. Referencing the movie's plot, it has since come into popular lexicon to describe a situation wherein an abuser encourages their target to question and undermine their own judgment and sanity. Gaslighting is a psychological battleground relating to toxic power dynamics, pervasive across personal and political realms. An insightful subtlety in Judith's series (which she began in 2019) is her intentional misspelling of "Gaslighting" in each painting, removing the "h," so that the viewer is prompted to momentarily question their own sanity. On the most primal level, the individual gaslights the Self.

As in all of her work, Judith Bernstein commands complete ownership of her subject matter. Representational figures float in an open void, and absurd games of manipulation are at the forefront of turbulent dynamics: mirroring the current geopolitical atrocities. Since receiving her MFA from Yale in 1967, Bernstein has developed a reputation as one of the most unwaveringly provocative artists of her generation. For over 50 years, her work has been an autobiographical exploration of the connection between the political and the sexual. It is about her rage at injustice. It is the core of what she's about. Steadfast in her cultural, political and social critique throughout her career, Bernstein surged into art world prominence in the early 1970s with her monumental anti-war and Feminist charcoal drawings of penis-screw hybrids; early incarnations of which were exhibited at AIR Gallery and Brooks Jackson Iolas Gallery, NY; Brooklyn Museum; and MoMA P.S.1, among other institutions.



Solo exhibitions include *Gaslighting Forever* at Kasmin Gallery, NY (2021); *Hot Hands* at The Box, LA (2020); *Blue Balls* at Karma International, Zurich (2019); *Money Shot* at Kasmin Gallery, NY (2018); *Cabinet of Horrors* at The Drawing Center, NY (2017); *Cock in a Box* at The Box, LA (2017); *Dicks of Death* at Mary Boone Gallery, NY (2016); *Voyeur* at Mary Boone Gallery, NY (2015); *Judith Bernstein: Rising* at Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway (2016); *Birth of the Universe* at Gavin Brown's enterprise, NY (2014); *Rising* at Studio Voltaire, London (2014); *Judith Bernstein: HARD* at the New Museum, NY (2012); and *Fuck Vietnam* at The Box, LA (2011).

Group exhibitions include *Permanent Collection* at Kunsthhaus Zurich (2021); *Seven Stations*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War*, at The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. (2019); *United by AIDS*, Migros Museum, Zurich (2019); *Masculinity* at Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany (2019); *Human Interest* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2016); *Toys Redux* at Migros Museum, Zurich (2015); *America Is Hard To See* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2015); *Keep Your Timber Limber* at ICA, London (2013); and *The Historical Box*, Hauser and Wirth, Zurich and London (2011-2012).