

KATHRYN  
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FINE ARTS  
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**KATHRYN MARKEL FINE ARTS PRESENTS AN EXHIBITION OF NEW WORK  
BY ARTIST FRAN SHALOM**

***Taking the Backward Step* features new paintings by artist Fran Shalom in New York City  
October 26 - December 2, 2023**

**NEW YORK, NY — October 18th, 2023 — Kathryn Markel Fine Arts** is excited to announce an upcoming exhibition of new paintings by Fran Shalom. *Taking the Backward Step* is Shalom's fourth solo show with the gallery, and will be on view from October 26 - December 2, 2023 at the 529 West 20th Street gallery. The show will run concurrently with a group exhibition that she curated, titled *Alive and Frisky*.

Defined by her pared-down shapes, hard-edge lines, and vivid, cartoon-like colors, Fran Shalom weaves the formal aesthetics of abstraction with playful improvisation. A simplified shape takes center stage in Shalom's work, nearly filling the picture plane, and centered or resting on the bottom edge. The shapes are anthropomorphized by rounding the edges and her high-chroma palette activates the forms, creating dynamic compositions and a lively dance between figure and ground. With a few playful turns, Shalom transforms abstract shapes into endearing characters in oddly colorful worlds.



While Shalom engages viewers with her keen use of color, form, and wit she is careful to be deliberately non-representational, eliminating any reference that is too leading. She deftly paints out or re-shapes recognizable elements, leaving behind purely abstract, energetic shapes. The initial tug of recognition draws the viewer in, but it's Shalom's intention, decisions and choices that intrigue. Viewers are left to navigate the surface, making connections with the vibrant interplay of colors and forms. *Taking the Backward Step* demonstrates the power of abstract art to evoke emotions and tell stories without the use of representation.

“Taking the Backward Step” is a phrase by the Japanese Zen master Eihei Dogen, and refers to the practice of turning inward to observe the nature of the mind. It encourages one to let go of their usual ways of perceiving, and to instead directly experience the present moment without judgment or attachment. With the Zen teachings in mind, Shalom translates her inquisitiveness and impartiality while painting. “Sometimes I can get out of my own way and sometimes I fail. When I can, I improvise, stay curious and playful, and try not to prematurely judge the work. It's a fine balance and a continual challenge,” she says.

“Intentionality in the moment is where I try to be.” - Fran Shalom

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Shalom has exhibited across the US, including solo shows at the Hunterdon Museum in NJ and the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, MA. Her work is included in public collections such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Rose Art Museum in MA and the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. She's received many fellowships and grants, including the Pollack Krasner Foundation Artist Grant, the Mid-Atlantic Individual Artist Fellowship, the New Jersey Individual Artist Grant and residencies with Art Omi and The MacDowell Colony Fellowship. She earned an MFA in Painting at Montclair State University and an MFA in Photography at San Francisco Art Institute. She lives and works in NJ.

**IMAGE CAPTION**

Fran Shalom, "*Tell it Slant*," 2023, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in.

**MEDIA CONTACT**

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**ABOUT KATHRYN MARKEL FINE ARTS**

Established in 1975 with the belief that significant contemporary art can be beautiful as well as visually and intellectually rigorous, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts is committed to the experience of discovery and collecting at the highest level. Committed to serving a deep network of collectors and institutions, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts showcases a diverse array of primary market artists, unified by excellence in their craft, compelling intellectual framework, and a love of the art-making process. <https://www.markelfinearts.com/>

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