



48 WALKER ST | FEB 24 – MAR 26, 2022

*Blue Kinetic*, 2021, porcelain, earthenware, glaze  
7 1/2 x 5 x 5 3/8 in. (19.1 x 12.7 x 13.7 cm)

# Kathy Butterly

## *Color In Forming*

James Cohan is pleased to present *Color In Forming*, an exhibition of new sculptural work by Kathy Butterly, on view at 48 Walker Street from February 24 through March 26. This is Butterly's second solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Saturday, February 26 from 2-6 PM. Masks are required for entry.

For nearly 30 years, Kathy Butterly has created striking ceramic sculptures with a powerful individuality that evince her technical mastery of the medium. Clay allows Butterly to work with color in three dimensions, pushing her materials to their expressive and physical limits. Her unparalleled explorations of form and color continue to expand the field of contemporary studio ceramics. While Butterly works on an intimate scale, complexity, virtuosity, and rigor are condensed in her vessels, each creating an expansive universe of its own.

All the works in this exhibition begin as a single cast form originating from a store-bought fishbowl, akin to a readymade. Butterly pours wet porcelain clay into a plaster mold, manipulating the unfired clay by pinching, pulling, folding, and carving, until she feels the work's distinct form and personality emerge. The sculpture is subsequently fired and glazed repeatedly—sometimes as many as 30 times—allowing her to build color and texture with accumulated layers of glaze and hand-carved ornamentation. Each sculpture is an exercise in the balance

between chaos and control. For Butterly, who often works on a sculpture for as long as a year, continuously building color and defining the form, a work is only finished when it has an undeniable sense of presence.

The 24 new works in this exhibition are built upon Butterly's realization that "the form never changes—it's the color that changes the form." Here, a relatively uniform shape is transformed through glazing, coloration, and ornamentation, parsing the balance between uniformity and difference. Giving herself a limited set of parameters, Butterly works within a reduced palette heavy on dusky purple-blues, egg-yolk yellows, silky whites, greens, and black, exploring how color responds and evokes mood. Yet within this almost limited palette, Butterly uses surprising juxtapositions of color and texture to create moments of tactile allure and chromatic delight. Strokes of cadmium orange, drips of vermilion red, and swathes of fleshy, craquelure pink hug the soft curves and sharp corners of these sculptures, affirming Butterly's reputation as a colorist par excellence and a master of glazing. The beading, ornamentation, and linework that proliferate across these objects have increasingly become important aspects of Butterly's sculptures. Each minuscule bead in the string is deftly hand-carved by the artist, a Lilliputian statement of remarkable technical prowess.

The question of display has long been a grappling point for Butterly as a sculptor. These new works incorporate the mechanisms of their own display, literally fusing their supports into their sculptural forms. Each porcelain sculpture is set upon an earthenware block that she describes not as a pedestal, but as a podium: a place from which the work can speak. The podiums wrestle and commingle with the forms they support to create new, dynamically integrated sculptures that Butterly considers three-dimensional diptychs of sorts. These works reinforce Butterly's insistence and conviction that a very small object can take up space on its own terms. As she notes, "it's not the scale of the work, it's the power of its presence."

Kathy Butterly (b. 1963, Amityville, NY) has exhibited widely in the United States and internationally. Her current solo exhibition, *Kathy Butterly: Out of one, many / Headscales*, is on view through February 27, 2022, at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. The exhibition will travel to the Portland Museum of Art in Fall 2022. In 2019, Butterly was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis. Recently, Butterly's work was featured in group exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, and the Anderson Collection at Stanford University.

Butterly's works are in the permanent collections of institutions including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; the Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME; and the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA among others. In addition, Kathy Butterly has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants including a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant (2017), a Guggenheim Fellowship Award (2014), a Smithsonian American Art Museum's Contemporary Artist Award (2012), a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2011), and a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2009). Butterly received her BFA at Moore College of Art before earning an MFA at the University of California, Davis. She lives and works in New York, NY.

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