



Michelle Grabner, *Untitled*, 2023
Lava stone, bronze, and oil
20 x 20 in. (50.8 x 50.8 cm)

48 WALKER ST | JUN 28 – JUL 28, 2023

Michelle Grabner

James Cohan is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Michelle Grabner, on view from June 28 through July 28 at 48 Walker Street. This is Grabner's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.

Over the past 30 years, Michelle Grabner has distinguished herself as an artist, teacher, writer, and critic, developing a wide ranging and astute perspective indebted to each of these interconnected endeavors. Central to all these ventures is her work in the studio.

Taking the form of a survey, Grabner's latest exhibition with the gallery brings together bodies of work from across her career and oeuvre, including paintings, sculptures, and photography. Unlike a typical overview, nearly all the artworks on view were made in 2023. The exhibition evinces the variety and rigor of Grabner's practice as it has developed over her three-decade career and demonstrates the central stylistic and theoretical concerns that continue to define her creative output.

Each strain of Grabner's work is unified by her sustained investment in revealing the latent politics within vernacular patterns and forms. Moving beyond the celebratory mode of Pop's appropriation of everyday consumer items and imbuing the Minimalist grid with political as well as formal content, Grabner recasts, re-presents, and repeats objects from domestic life to uncover the power structures contained therein. Questioning the legitimacy of painting and following the example of the Pictures Generation, Grabner developed this politically oriented strategy of appropriation in her earliest works on canvas. As she has noted, "*I have always been a painter who examines various power structures inherent in patterns and abstract arrangements. Because I believe that all forms are political, I have committed myself and 30 years of painting to re-articulating vernacular patterns in order to shift the unobserved into critical sight.*"

Whether painstakingly rendering the gingham grid of a household textile, casting a crochet blanket in bronze, or gilding food tins in silverleaf, Grabner probes and celebrates the difference that remains present within repetition and sameness. Recognizing the difference Grabner seeks to show us takes time and attention. The subtle shifts in color, texture, and pattern that play out across Grabner's paintings requires the viewer to slow down and engage in a kind of close looking that has become increasingly rare within our digital-image-fueled culture. These works defiantly refuse reproduction. The artist's canvases are at once playful and exacting, undulating and vibrating from slight transitions in tone and moments of misalignment in the grid. Similarly, Grabner embraces entropy as a source of differentiation within otherwise identical forms, encouraging, for example, the slow and idiosyncratic oxidization that will transform the silver surfaces of her tin sculptures over time.

Michelle Grabner (b. 1962, Oshkosh, Wisconsin) received her MA in Art History and BFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and an MFA in Art Theory and Practice from Northwestern University. She is currently Senior Chair of the Department of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and was a Core Critic at Yale University in the Department of Painting and Printmaking from 2011 to 2014. She returned to Yale in 2020 as a Visiting Artist. A regular contributor to *Artforum*, her writing has also appeared in publications including *Art in America*, *Frieze*, *Modern Painters*, and *ArtAgenda*. Grabner co-curated the 2014 Whitney Biennial with Anthony Elms and Stuart Comer, and served as the inaugural artistic director of FRONT International, a triennial exhibition in the metropolitan area of Cleveland, OH that ran from July through September of 2018. Along with her husband, artist Brad Killam, she is the founder and co-director of two non-profit art spaces in Wisconsin: The Suburban and The Poor Farm.

The John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, WI commissioned Grabner to create an artist-built environment in June 2021. Grabner has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; Indianapolis Museum of Art, Hedreen Gallery at Seattle University; INOVA, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Ulrich Museum, Wichita; and University Galleries, Illinois State University. She has been included in major group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Akron Art Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate St. Ives, UK; and Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland. Her work is included in the collections of museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MO; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN; MUDAM, Luxemburg; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, WI; Knoxville Museum of Art, TN; Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE; Daimler Contemporary, Berlin; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Grabner lives and works in Milwaukee.

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