

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

James
Cohan



High Vibration, 2025, Porcelain, earthenware, glaze, 9 3/8 x 5 5/8 x 5 in (23.8 x 14.3 x 12.7 cm).

48 WALKER ST | JAN 9 - FEB 14 2026

Kathy Butterly

High Vibration

James Cohan is pleased to present *High Vibration*, an exhibition of new sculptural work by Kathy Butterly, on view at 48 Walker Street from January 9 through February 14, 2026. This is Butterly's fourth solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, January 9 from 6-8 PM.

For nearly four decades, Kathy Butterly has created striking ceramic sculptures with a powerful individuality that showcase her technical virtuosity and bold artistic vision. Butterly uses clay and glaze to paint 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 and reflect sustained engagement with histories of abstraction and the vessel. Despite their intentionally small scale, Butterly's sculptures are dense with complexity, wit, and precision, with each work constituting its own rich, immersive world.

High Vibration marks a significant evolution in Butterly's practice as she moves away from molds built from ready-made forms such as a store-bought fishbowl or pint glass, having designed and refined her own vessel over time. This unique mold now serves as the basis for her production process, a deeply personal template that reflects years of formal experimentation. Each sculpture, cast in porcelain from this original vessel form, is set upon a hand-formed earthenware cube. These three-dimensional diptychs represent a distillation of essential geometries—the circle and the square—constituting an investigation into how seriality becomes a fertile ground for radical reinvention.

Butterly first fills a plaster mold with liquid porcelain, then shapes the malleable clay through obsessive pinching and pulling until a unique character is revealed. She then refines the piece, carving and smoothing its surfaces in a manner she likens to three-dimensional line drawing. What follows is an intensive process of repeated firing and glazing during which Butterly gradually builds depth through layered glazes and hand-carved details. Every sculpture embodies a delicate tension between spontaneity and precision, seriality and difference. Butterly may spend up to a year on a single work, patiently layering color and refining its shape, completing it only when the piece achieves an unmistakable commanding presence.

High Vibration features sculptures that range from minimalist monochromes to works laden with obsessive detail. Butterly's process remains deeply intuitive, inflected by her life experiences and her close observation of the world around her. Several of the monochromatic works were created in Maine, where Butterly's natural environment subtly informs her palette and process. These works explore ideas of luminosity and color theory, investigating the aura and emotional value that color projects and how it activates form. Some works employ dry matte surfaces alongside high gloss finishes, creating unexpected juxtapositions of texture and light. In the titular work, *High Vibration*, 2025, an undulating, organic form rendered in vibrant canary yellow sits atop a plummy purple cubic base. The smooth, sensuous folds of the matte vessel play against the glossy geometric rigidity of the cube below, creating a visual tension between the organic and the architectural, between movement and stillness. Works such as *Thar*, and *Syzygy*, both 2025, are deliberately absent of ornamentation, allowing form, shadow, and color to speak with quiet authority.

The works made in her East Village studio, by contrast, are infused with gesture and decorative elan that reflect the frenetic thrum of urban existence and the ways in which Butterly finds visual inspiration in every corner of her city neighborhood. *Night Glow*, 2025, perches an expressive vessel whose dramatically ruffled edges suggest the hem of a twirling skirt upon a chartreuse cubic base. The painterly glaze echoes the rhythmic energy contained within the form.

On the heels of her solo presentation at James Cohan, *Kathy Butterly: Assume Yes*, a major retrospective exhibition of Butterly's work, will be on view at the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College from February 14 - July 26, 2026, as part of the museum's 25th anniversary program. The exhibition, organized by Ian Berry, Dayton Director at the Tang, will feature approximately fifty artworks spanning over thirty years, from early sculptures dating to 1994 to the present. *Kathy Butterly: Assume Yes* is accompanied by the publication of a major monograph with contributions by Glenn Adamson, Ian Berry, Forrest Gander, Theodora Bocanegra Lang, Nancy Princenthal and Elena Sisto.

Kathy Butterly (b. 1963, Amityville, NY) has exhibited widely in the United States and internationally. The artist has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Portland Museum of Art in Portland, Maine, and 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.

Her works are in the permanent collections of institutions including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME; Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; and the Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ, 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), a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2009), and an Anonymous Was A Woman Grant (2002). Butterly received her BFA at Moore College of Art before earning an MFA at University of California, Davis. She lives and works between New York and Maine.

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