

# BERGGRUEN

GALLERY

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## CLARE KIRKCONNELL

### *Inside Out*

July 28 - August 27, 2022

Berggruen Gallery is proud to present *Clare Kirkconnell: Inside Out*, an exhibition of recent paintings by California artist, Clare Kirkconnell. This show marks Kirkconnell's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view July 28 through August 27, 2022.

Clare Kirkconnell's new body of work, *Inside Out*, is a thoughtful chronicle of the last two years in which mental and physical well-being meant navigating the new norm of sheltering in. A chapter in which morning walks brought balance to a life otherwise lived inside. Kirkconnell thinks of each painting as a journal entry, some of which chronicle joy and discovery, and others that deal with loss and an emotional state often turned inside out.

In the words of renowned poet Mary Oliver, "It is a serious thing just to be alive on this fresh morning in this broken world." And indeed, Kirkconnell found that the ritual of daily walks at sunrise became a time of meditation and observation, which in turn inspired the work in the studio. The dew atop a spider's web, or the coil of a branch became cues for creation and personal reflection. *Inside Out* is a collection of these observations and musings, and a look at how nature enlightens and strengthens us in difficult times.

*Inside Out* debuts Kirkconnell's intricate web paintings, accessing a theme of openness that prevails throughout the body of work. Utilizing her technique of stitching thread onto the flat plains of the painted canvas—as first explored in her 2019 exhibition *Women's Work*—Kirkconnell weaves beads and embroidery atop oil paint, creating unique multi-medium works that simultaneously revere complexity and ease. In her exemplary work *Silk and Jewels*, Kirkconnell threads a glistening web over her gradient green canvas. For the artist, the webs are emblematic of portals rather than confines. Their jewel-like presence creates a symbol of an unknown, yet intriguing, liminal space. *Silk and Jewels* invites viewers into its netted construction and reveals its ornate stitching on the verso.

In other works, Kirkconnell explores how attending to the land creates an opening for growth and change. She revisits pruning as a theme from her early Napa Valley paintings, harnessing the practice as a metaphor for moving into a new season.

For Kirkconnell, working with textiles is an integral part of her creative process. At a young age, she was introduced to the fiber arts by the craftswomen of her family. *Inside Out* takes particular interest in the practice of visible mending, whereby repair and reinforcement are thought to add beauty as well as resilience. Several of Kirkconnell's paintings include stitchwork, both actual and trompe-l'oeil, alluding to the processes of mending and healing. *Mend It, Darn It* is one such example in which an open sky receives a stitched patch and a visibly darned hole.

Many of the works in *Inside Out* chronicle personal events of the last two years. *Cait's Dahlias* depicts strewn flowers, a few petals fallen loose, and a pair of scissors open at the ready. Kirkconnell shared that this piece celebrates the wedding of her son and daughter-in-law, an intimate gathering held in their backyard. A small, yet intuitive visual

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encapsulates a moment of joy, growth and forward momentum within the artist's life. Another painting, *Glass Mountain* depicts the hill behind Kirkconnell's studio, ravaged by fire a year ago and now in the process of mending. And yet another painting, *Gretchen's Garden*, commemorates the spirit of Gretchen Berggruen, whose love of beauty, family and friendship were so perfectly illustrated in the bounty of her garden and the joy she took in sharing it. Throughout *Inside Out*, Kirkconnell seeks comfort in nature and presents an assemblage of works that are personal expressions of joy and loss along with healing and growth.

Clare Kirkconnell was born in Brownsville, Texas in 1955. She developed an interest in the arts early on and continued her education at Palomar College in San Marcos, California. After college, Kirkconnell spent several years as a fashion model traveling the world from bases in New York and Paris. She concurrently studied acting, landing several film and television roles, including a three-year run as the female lead in the highly acclaimed drama *The Paper Chase*. Never abandoning her early interest in painting, Kirkconnell then continued her studies at Santa Monica College and Otis Parsons School of Design. Her work has been consistently well-received and can be found in many significant private collections. Kirkconnell lives and works in St. Helena, California.

*Clare Kirkconnell: Inside Out*, July 28 - August 27, 2022. On view at 10 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Images and preview are available upon request. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone (415) 781-4629 or by email [info@berggruen.com](mailto:info@berggruen.com).

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