

# BERGGRUEN

GALLERY

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**MATT KLEBERG**  
**Pigeon Holes**

**September 14 – October 13, 2023**

Berggruen Gallery is proud to announce *Matt Kleberg: Pigeon Holes*, an exhibition of 14 new paintings. This show marks his first solo exhibition with the gallery. *Matt Kleberg: Pigeon Holes* will be on view from September 14 through October 13, 2023. The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Thursday, September 14, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

Drawing inspiration from myriad influences, Matt Kleberg's paintings operate like invitations into illusory spaces while remaining firmly rooted in the built world. Kleberg's artistic vocabulary is characterized by his distinctive use of architecturally inspired elements. Niches, beams, fans, arches, stripes, and sunbursts borrow from ornamental references such as stages and altars, suggesting an interest in performativity and ritual.

Central to this exhibition is the concept of the columbarium—an architectural structure dedicated to the dignified retention and ceremonial presentation of funerary urns. The artist's recent encounter with an ancient Roman columbarium segment displayed at the San Antonio Museum of Art sparked an intrigue, particularly inspired by the repetition of arch-shaped compartments within the façade. The term "columbarium" derives from the Latin phrase for "dovecote," historically referring to structures crafted to shelter doves or pigeons. The manifold, niche-like compartments found within shaped the origin of the term "pigeonhole." With a background in figuration, Kleberg approaches these paintings not merely as geometric abstractions but as unpopulated figural works. The wall-mounted paintings amount to a kaleidoscopic columbarium of sorts, their openings framed like electrically charged absences, populated here and there by the occasional *Bust* painting standing in as a statuary vessel. Within this context, Kleberg's niches serve as metaphors, embodying connection and potentially even assuming the role of human proxies. The arching forms cradle one another in an intimate embrace, evoking a resonance akin to the aesthetics of family portraiture. Balancing a sense of familiarity and harmony, these spaces also harbor an enigmatic quality, mirroring the complex facets of human relationships.

Kleberg's palette embraces earthy greens, the sky's dusty blue, and the warm terracotta tones of the South Texas landscape. Vivid, saturated hues disrupt these foundational pigments: the striking vermilion of a coral snake or the funk chartreuse of a green jay. These combinations give rise to an otherworldly chroma, culminating in an optical spectacle where multiple colors vie for prominence within the pictorial plane. The artist's command over the tactile nature of his medium, oil stick, infuses his work with a kinetic textural quality reminiscent of crushed velvet or television static. Delicate, spotted fragments of color from the underlying layers of oil stick emerge, bestowing the paintings with a depth that is often obscured unless viewed closely and in person. This tension enhances the anticipatory nature of the work, reflecting the potential for fullness within ostensibly vacant realms.

Matt Kleberg was born in 1985 in Kingsville, Texas. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 2008 and his MFA from the Pratt Institute in 2015. Coverage of his work can be found in various publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Artsy*, *Vice*, *Maake Magazine*, *ArtDaily*, *Juxtapoz Magazine*, and *Hyperallergic*. His work is featured in multiple private and public collections, including the Williams College Museum of Art, the AD&A Museum of the University of California Santa Barbara, the Old Jail Art Center, the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the National Gallery of Art. Kleberg currently lives and works in San Antonio, TX.

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*Matt Kleberg: Pigeon Holes*, September 14 – October 13, 2023. 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 at (415) 781-4629 or by email at [info@berggruen.com](mailto:info@berggruen.com).

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