

**Jake Berthot**

***What happened to Abstraction?***

February 2 – April 15, 2023

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 4 – 6PM



*3 Columns in Memory of Gertrude Stein, 1971, Oil on canvas, 83 1/2 x 143 1/2 inches*

*“In the 1970s there was a dialogue and an understanding of what people were doing. And there are still people who are really pissed off at me for changing course and painting a tree!”\* - Jake Berthot*

Betty Cunningham Gallery is pleased to open, *What happen to Abstraction?* featuring Jake Berthot’s abstract paintings from the 1970’s alongside of his imaginary landscapes completed the last 20 years of his life. This will be the fourth Jake Berthot exhibition at the Gallery since his passing in 2014. A celebration of the work and Jake will be held on Saturday, February 4th from 4 – 6 PM.

The current exhibition brings together 10 abstract paintings from the 1970’s in conversation with 10 of his late “tree/landscape” paintings dating from 1996 to 2014. What happened?

Jake Berthot held on to two tenets throughout his 45-year career, one was his attachment to the formal geometry of the grid and the other was his intuitive attraction to the poetry of an indeterminate space. He would twist the

# BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE  
IMMEDIATE RELEASE

grid to achieve several vanishing points gaining a place of sensation, or what he would call “a Rothko-like space.” Moving upstate in 1992 a new space enveloped him. His painting was in crisis.

As a start from 1992 - 96 he created a body of monochromatic red, small-scale paintings, some of which were exhibited at Dartmouth College in 1995, one appropriately titled ‘*Grief for that Future*’ Rume 1992-94 and another *Grief for that Past*, 1992-1994. Then, in 1996, surrounded by nature, Jake’s introduced the tree. It seemed a radical step away from abstraction to representation. However, Berthot’s commitment to geometry had turned into place. The underlying grid in the late works served to anchor the tree in an indefinite place defined by light and Berthot’s distinct hand. Poetry and structure, it was always abstract.

Jake Berthot was born in Niagara Falls, NY in 1939. He attended the New School for Social Research and Pratt Institute in the early 1960s. The artist held teaching positions at Cooper Union, Yale University, the University of Pennsylvania, and The School of Visual Arts. He received a number of awards and grants, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981, a National Endowment for the Arts Grant in 1983 and an Academy Institute Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1992. In 2016, the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC mounted a solo show of the artist’s work, *Jake Berthot: From the Collection and Promised Gifts*. Berthot’s work can be seen in a host of notable museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, all in New York City. Nationally, his work is in the collections of The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; and the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



*Old Birch*, 2000, Oil on panel, 22 x 23 inches

*Jake Berthot: What happened to Abstraction?* is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue and will remain on view through April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

\* Jake Berthot to Jennifer Samet, *Beer with a Painter*, Hyperallergic, December 7, 2013

---

**Listing Information:** Betty Cunningham Gallery is located at 15 Rivington Street, b/t Bowery and Chrystie Street, New York, NY 10002

T: 212-242-2772 E: [info@bettycunninghamgallery.com](mailto:info@bettycunninghamgallery.com) W: [www.bettycunninghamgallery.com](http://www.bettycunninghamgallery.com)

**Public Transportation:** F train to Second Ave, 6 Train to Spring Street, JZ Train to Bowery

**Gallery Hours:** Wed- Sat: 10am- 6pm, Sun: 12-6pm, Tues: by Appointment

15 RIVINGTON STREET  
NEW YORK NEW YORK 10002  
TEL 212 242-2772  
BETTYCUNINGHAMGALLERY.COM