

The Wound is the Place the Light Enters

An exhibition of work by Jake Berthot
October 14 – December 6, 2024



Untitled (Skull), ca. 2014; Oil, graphite, gesso on canvas; 24 x 24 inches

Betty Cuningham Gallery is pleased to present the *Wound is the Place the Light Enters*, October 14 through December 6, 2024. The exhibition and online viewing room features 5 paintings and 8 works on paper by Jake Berthot. The selection focuses upon *Skulls*, a subject that Berthot returned to intermittently up to the time of his death in December of 2014.

Throughout his 45-year career, Berthot held on to the geometry of the grid (all his sketches are grids) and the poetry of an indeterminate space. Twisting the grid to achieve several vanishing points allowed him to realize, as he would call it, "a Rothko-like space".

In his early abstract work, the central, deep space is framed by a painted edge. In the '80's, the oval enters, tautly fixed by the grid, confronting the viewer as a portrait. And, in the 90's, after Berthot moved from the city, trees, mountains, or simply light find their location in the darkness, locked in place by the grid.

The *Skull* is a subject that appears throughout art history, representing a multiplicity of meanings. Berthot's *Skull* paintings, of which there are very few, stand among his most powerful works. The grid is revealed and the *Skull* by its

very nature is laid bare, offering the steps to understanding as well as the pain of the unknown.

The title of the exhibition and viewing room, *The Wound is the Place the Light Enters*, is taken from a newly published book by Howard Norman. Together they mark a joint celebration of the life, work and wisdom of Jake Berthot.

The exhibition will be available online and at the gallery by appointment. *The Wound is the Place the Light Enters* by Howard Norman, published in September 2024 by Texas Tech University Press, is available online through the University and the gallery or on Amazon.

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. Awards and grants include 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*. In addition to the Phillip Collection, Berthot's work is in 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 and nationally, 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; Seattle Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art among others.

Listing Information: Betty Cuningham Gallery is located at 41 Union Square West #923, New York, NY 10003
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Public Transportation: L, N, Q, R, W, 4, 5, 6 trains to Union Square
Gallery Hours: Monday through Friday by appointment

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