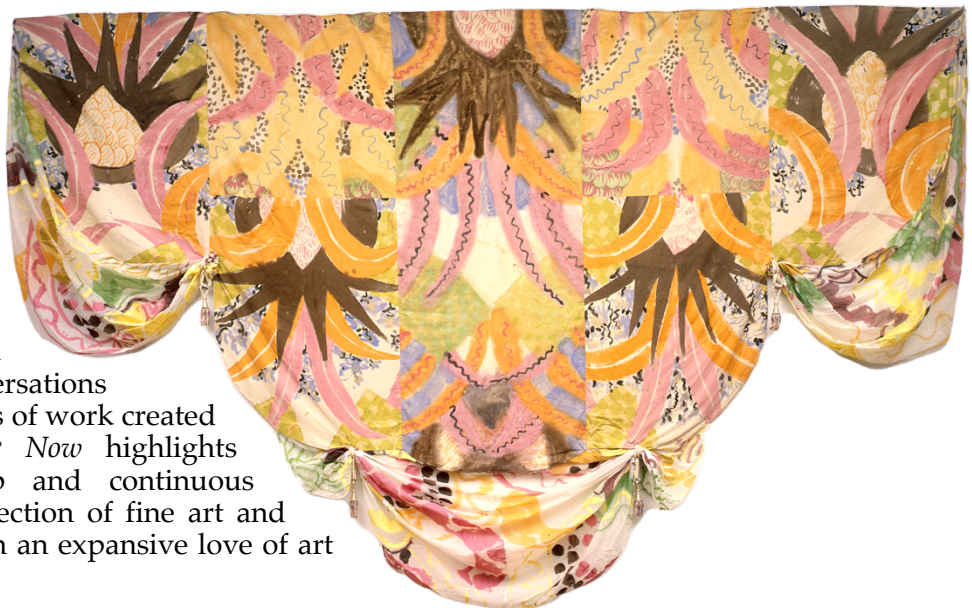


Robert Kushner: *Then & Now*



February 16 – March 25, 2023
Opening Reception February 17, 6-8 pm

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to present *Robert Kushner: Then & Now*, an exhibition bringing together fabric paintings from the 1970s and 1980s, many on view in the United States for the first time in forty years, side-by-side with recent paintings on canvas. Inviting conversations between these two bodies of work created decades apart, *Then & Now* highlights Robert Kushner's deep and continuous exploration of the intersection of fine art and decoration, drawing from an expansive love of art and visual history.



The artwork pairings in the exhibition invite the viewer to find resonances, or even discord, between the recent paintings and the early works. Throughout his career, several aspects of Kushner's practice have remained constant: his use of color harmonies, pattern, an interest in expansive flatness, and the activation of surface texture, along with his continuous study of Henri

Matisse. Looking at *Visions Beyond the Pearly Curtain* (1975) and *For Betty* (2022) together, for instance, the curving patterns painted on draped fabric accentuate the sinuous lines of the objects in the still life. The abstract floral patterns of the fabric works foreshadow Kushner's long-standing investigation of flowers as a theme, as sources of beauty and nostalgia, as well as formally intricate relations of organic and geometric shapes.

Kushner first began using textiles and fabrics with acrylic paint in his 1971 performance pieces. In these performances, the fabrics were both functional pieces and art objects when the costumes were installed on the walls as two-dimensional objects. Through his use of fabric, Kushner connected painting, decoration, and clothing, while also blurring gender issues and questioning stereotypes of artistic practice and materials. By the mid-1970s, Kushner was creating wall-specific fabric paintings, ones that were not a part of a performance. His conscious decision to ignore the rise in popularity of reductivist painting on canvas, and to exhibit unstretched fabrics that were pinned to a wall, was a deliberate action that he continued until the mid-1990s. In 1988, Kushner first began to explore oil painting and collage on canvas. Though there was a fundamental shift in his practice at this time, Kushner continued to use color and pattern as fundamental building blocks in his paintings.



Hi Octane, 2022. Oil, acrylic, and conté crayon on linen, 36 x 72 inches

In his new paintings, textiles remain a cornerstone, with patterned kimonos and suzani fabrics composing the layered backgrounds of the still lifes, anchoring Kushner's current practice to his early Pattern & Decoration roots. Kushner explains, "For me at this stage in my studio life, my own big picture is about pulling in as much as possible of my life experience. How wide a net, how big a panorama can I include in the works I am making now? ... I am taking all my heroes and heroines and mentors and trying to pull them all together into a raucous colloquium."

Since 1975, Kushner's work has been exhibited extensively in the United States, Europe, and Japan. In 1984, Kushner was the subject of one-person exhibitions at the Whitney Museum and the Brooklyn Museum, and in 1987, a mid-career summary was organized by the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art. Kushner's work was featured in the 1979 and 1981 Venice Biennales and the 1975, 1981, and 1985 Whitney Biennials. More recently, Kushner has been included in numerous exhibitions internationally: *Pattern and Decoration: Ornament as Promise*, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany (traveled to mumok Vienna and the Ludwig Museum, Budapest); *Pattern, Decoration & Crime*, Le Consortium, Dijon; *Less is a Bore: Maximalist Art and Design*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*, Museum of Contemporary Art, LA and the Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; and *Greater New York* at MoMA P.S.1.

DC Moore Gallery specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am-6pm. For more information, photographs, or to arrange a viewing please call 212-247-2111 or email Caroline Magavern at cmagavern@dcmooregallery.com.