

“What if everything in the world were a misunderstanding, what if laughter were really tears?”

—Soren Kierkegaard

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present *Birthday Boy: Jubilation and Melancholia*, a solo exhibition of recent work by artist Zipora Fried. This is the artist’s third solo presentation with the gallery, presenting a recent series of color-pencil abstract drawings and new ceramic works. *Birthday Boy: Jubilation and Melancholia* will be on view December 14, 2023, through February 3, 2024. A public opening reception will be held Thursday, December 14, from 6-8 PM.

The drawings featured in *Birthday Boy: Jubilation and Melancholia* reiterate color and line as the most foundational elements of Fried’s colored-pencil abstractions. Rows of pigment are built up line by line, with each stroke of the pencil existing as both a self-contained singular gesture and a constituent strand of a greater whole. As one’s gaze travels across Fried’s chromatic landscapes, lighter hues meld into vibrant saturation, while deeper tones unfurl into areas of shadow. Fried views the length of time devoted to the application of each mark as a process of sustained contemplation, imbuing the drawings with emotion and transforming them into prisms of refracted color and mood.

The exhibition title indicates what becomes the formal and conceptual dichotomy structuring this body of work: the inextricable relation of joy to sorrow, celebration to mourning, and euphoria to grief. Her luminous color fields become abstract articulations of these mirrored emotions, their permeable depth, and the diffuse boundary between them. A common palette of pinks, purples, blues, and greens is alternately shaded and illuminated in parallel tonalities, such as the gradations seen in *I Know My Way Through These Woods* (2023) and *Dance When Your Roots are Torn* (2023). Alongside a new group of sculptures, Fried’s color-pencil drawings elude interest in any surety of representational image or language.

Zipora Fried (b. Haifa, Israel) studied at the Academy of Applied Arts, Vienna. Recent exhibitions include *Zipora Fried* (2021) and *As the Ground Turns Solid* (2019), Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; (*wordless*) at Small Editions, New York (2017); *Late October, On Stellar Rays*, New York, NY (2016); and *Zipora Fried: Some Things Have Meaning, Others Don’t*, Marfa Contemporary, Marfa, TX (2015). Her work can be found in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Magasin 3, Stockholm, Sweden; The Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria; and the Austrian Government’s Permanent Collection of Contemporary Art. She lives and works in New York.

For additional information and press inquiries please contact Laura Weinthal at 212.929.2262 or [laura@sikkemajenkinsco.com](mailto:laura@sikkemajenkinsco.com).

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