

An abstract painting by Michael Berryhill, featuring a central figure rendered in soft, blended colors of pink, orange, and purple. The background is composed of various textures and colors, including dark, expressive black brushstrokes and lighter, more delicate washes of blue, green, and yellow. The overall style is expressive and gestural, with visible brushwork and a rich, layered color palette.

DIMIN

**THE
ARMORY
SHOW**

SEPTEMBER 6-8
JAVITS CENTER

**MICHAEL
BERRYHILL**



MICHAEL BERRYHILL

Michael Berryhill (b. 1972, El Paso, TX) lives and works in Ellenville, NY. He received his MFA from Columbia University in 2009. He has exhibited extensively in the United States having solo exhibitions at Night Gallery in Los Angeles, CA; Kate Werble in New York, NY, and Derek Eller in New York, NY.

Berryhill has been reviewed by John Yau in *Hyperallergic*, Carrie Moyer in *Art in American*, in *Artforum*, and in *The Brooklyn Rail*, among others.



Michael Berryhill
Quiet Car, 2024
Oil on linen
64 ¼ x 84 ¼ in
163.2 x 214 cm

\$35,000



Michael Berryhill

June, 2024

Oil on linen

62 ¼ x 48 ¼ in

158.1 x 122.6 cm

\$24,000

HYPERALLERGIC

A Painter's Belief in Painting

Michael Berryhill sees painting as an “amazing place” where the miraculous can still occur.

John Yau October 17, 2020



Michael Berryhill "Happy Ending" (2020)

At a time when quirkiness often feels contrived, and a widespread attitude seems to all but insist that art deliver its content front and center, Michael Berryhill has developed a powerful, resistant, and important alternative. It begins with the fusion of a distinct palette with a process of addition and subtraction that enables the artist

to work everything out on the rough weave of the painting's linen surface.

Berryhill's Day-Glo palette, which shares something with Odilon Redon's rich, ethereal color and Raoul Dufy's heightened ambient light, seems inspired by painting's past as much it is by the fluorescent artifice of computer screens. However, the hues and combinations he attains are all his own, as is his technique of applying them.

Like the artists associated with Abstract Expressionism, many of whom developed personal techniques for applying their medium to the painting's surface, Berryhill also works in a very particular way, which dissolves the borders between drawing and painting.

In contrast to Willem de Kooning and others who liked to draw with a loaded brush, Berryhill uses a small brush and dry brushstrokes to apply his pigments, often to a surface that he has scraped down, leaving ghostly shapes. At times his method bears comparison to raking an oil stick across a rough surface, but he possesses far more control, nuance, and delicacy than that would suggest.

In addition to the drily painted lines he uses to convey a contour or to separate one area from another, Berryhill optically animates his paintings through combinations of odd complimentary hues.

Berryhill is interested in the area of perception spanning legibility and illegibility, the crystalline and the fuzzy. What is the relationship between seeing and memory? How much have our perceptions of the world been shaped by the culture or religion in which we were raised? Where does the border between the commonplace and the unique begin to dissolve? What is shared and what remains private?

By raising these questions in his work, Berryhill reveals his preoccupation with painting's capacity for the imaginative and solitary, rather than with its ability to explore social interactions, be they interpersonal or public.

In his current show, Michael Berryhill: Solo Exhibition (September 24 – November 12, 2020) at Kate Werble Gallery, which has temporarily relocated from its Tribeca space to the second floor of a townhouse on 73rd Street, between Madison and Park, the artist's subjects range from an oversized turquoise blue parrot grasps a paintbrush with one claw and a circular palette with the other ("Painting Parrot," 2020) to elusive forms set within proscenium-like structures ("Halcyon" and "Amazing Place,"



"Michael Berryhill: Solo Exhibition" at Kate Werble Gallery, installation view

both 2020) to works that sit squarely between abstraction and representation without sliding fully into either (the large, marvelously perplexing "Reservoir," 2020). Along with the seven paintings on display, which range in scale from 14 by 11 inches to 70 by 60 inches, Berryhill is showing three sculptures — the first time he has done so...

[Keep reading on Hyperallergic](#)



Michael Berryhill
Peace Sign, 2024
Oil on linen
58 x 50 1/8 in
147.3 x 127.3 cm

\$24,000



Michael Berryhill

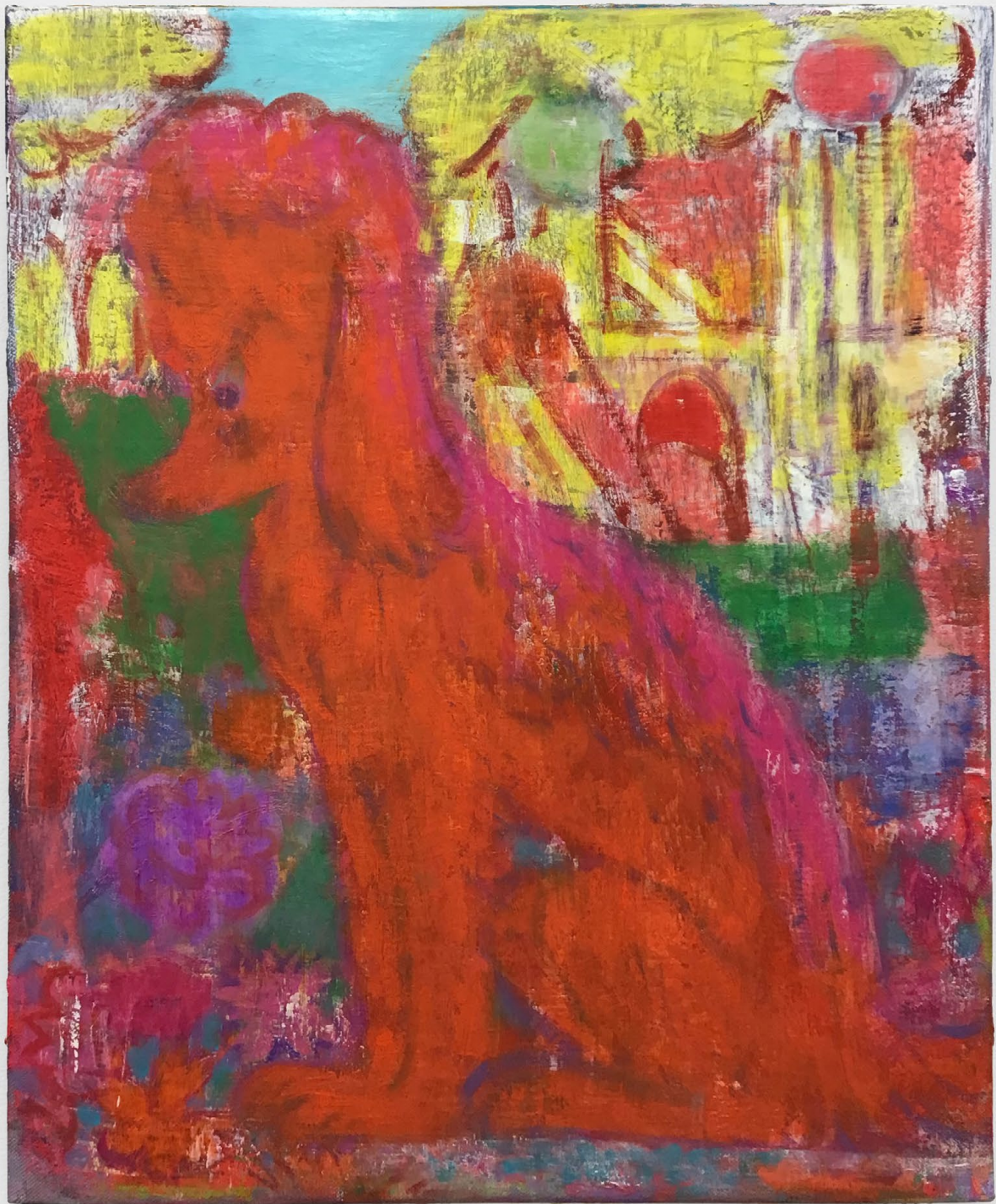
Art House, 2024

Oil on linen

62 1/8 x 48 1/8 in

157.8 x 122.2 cm

\$24,000



Michael Berryhill

Tulip, 2021

Oil on linen

34 x 28 in

86.4 x 71.1 cm

\$15,000

Michael Berryhill: *El Paso*

By Jason Stopa

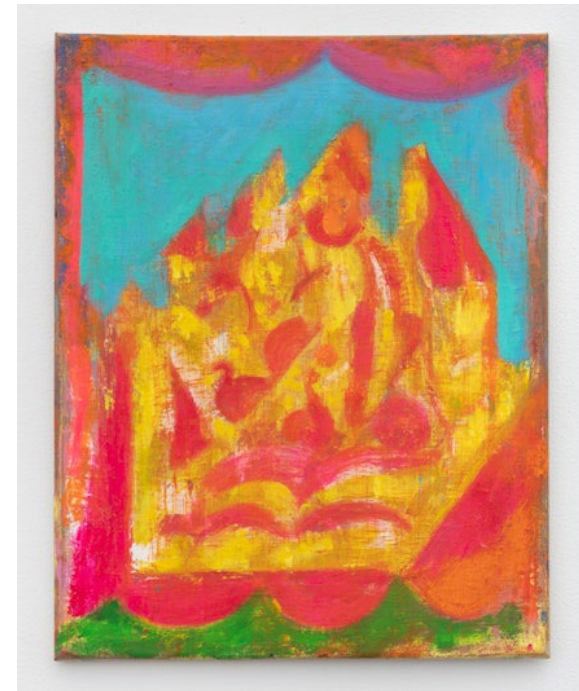
In the late nineteenth century, Édouard Vuillard retreated from the dominant themes of contemporary French painting—Parisian nightlife, portraiture, bathers, and the landscape—and focused instead on domestic scenes as a site of interiority. His paintings were populated by friends, lovers, patterned curtains, flowers and dining tables; all manners of personal life redrawn into shimmering, patterned space to hallucinatory effect. The paintings were not a window into the world, but rather a world unto themselves. Michael Berryhill's solo show, *El Paso*, currently on view at Derek Eller, starts from a similar desire for interiority but flirts with a window-like space wherein the drama plays out. Splitting the difference feels like a real sweet spot for Berryhill whose eleven works reference his childhood experiences growing up in Texas. Partially rendered cowboys, parrots, basketballs, books, lions, and suns set against hazy atmospheres appear in several works, yet he hinders our desire for narrative, putting him out of step with current painting trends. He's a smart painter; the latest trend is often just that. The artist is after a middle ground where meaning is derived by placement and association, something he shares with contemporaries like Ted Gahl and Tal R. The resulting paintings are quirky, ecstatic reveries, romantic and humorous.

Berryhill is interested in painting as patina, and he paints in thin layers using small, dry brushes to apply saturated paint. He then scrapes and wipes away paint to reveal previous layers. These ghost layers reveal incident and accident, and are often reanimated as they become contoured. Berryhill's interest in patina isn't aesthetic only; it's a desire for history rooted in grand narratives.

The American South embodies our messy, cultural past, our cowboy myths as well as our fascination with the desert.

Hueco Tanks (2022) is one of the smaller paintings on view, but feels like the key to unlocking the others. The artist paints a bright, reddish-magenta border that envelopes the perimeter of a turquoise background, which reads as blue sky. Berryhill leans on the capacity of paint to read as patina here, the border feels aged by way of scraping and opens up like a curtain inviting viewers to peer within. He paints a lemon-yellow crag-like form near

NEW YORK
Derek Eller Gallery
Michael Berryhill: *El Paso*
Nov. 17 – Dec. 23, 2022



Michael Berryhill, *Hueco Tanks*, 2022

the center that butts up against an emerald green wave at the bottom. This crag-like form resembles a mountain top, yet is only partially rendered, and the scraping away of paint positions this form as ultimately indeterminate, lending it a poetic dimension. Sharp, cadmium red organic lines and triangles mark the yellow expanse, suggesting some rocky terrain. Though its specificity is difficult to parse, the atmosphere is palpable. It is a mesmerizing little world. The title gives us some context into what Berryhill is after. Hueco Tanks is a historic site in El Paso replete with low mountains and rock drawings dating back to nearly 8,000 years ago.

Other works like *The Long Game* (2022) nod to a phrase used often in the art world to discuss the stakes and progress of various aesthetic, cultural, and market driven discourse. In Berryhill's painting, a pale purple-magenta figure in a cowboy hat is down on bended knee, head bowed, as if about to propose. Wearing a tie and boots, he balances a basketball in his left hand and displays a palette near his knee. A pale-blue window-like space framed with the curtain-border surrounds the figure, while a bright orange sun shines above his head, and the edges of the painting are flecked by floating, abstract forms. This cowboy is a humorous, yet sincere romantic conflating two dreams: professional basketball player and professional artist. Games have fascinated painters for nearly a century. In a speech to the New York Chess Association, Duchamp once stated, "I have come to the conclusion that while all artists are not chess players, all chess players are artists." While the objective of painting is not to win, it still requires dedication; there are periods of incredible disappointment, and, if one is lucky, periods of great achievement. Berryhill's painting is like a self-portrait by proxy and cautionary tale about the short game, one that only trades in short-term rewards and appearances.

Berryhill is highly aware of current trends in painting but he chooses to subvert them all at once. Giorgio Agamben once defined contemporaneity as just that. The artist's anachronism serves him well. In contrast to the many painters engaged in never-ending storytelling, Berryhill aligns himself with the complexities of interiority, but he doesn't dispense with a window-like world altogether. The economy of social media thrives on legibility and storytelling. This has produced a widespread cultural desire to cognize all images, and fast. It's a visual culture of glances. Successful paintings complicate easy legibility by rewarding sustained looking. And they remind us that all storytelling is a work of fiction. Berryhill wants to avoid naming a thing or form, hovering just around specificity; it is one of the more difficult things to achieve in painting.



Michael Berryhill, *The Long Game*, 2022. Oil on linen. 62 x 48 in.



Michael Berryhill

Statue, 2024

Oil on linen

28 x 22 in

71.1 x 55.9 cm

\$11,000



Michael Berryhill

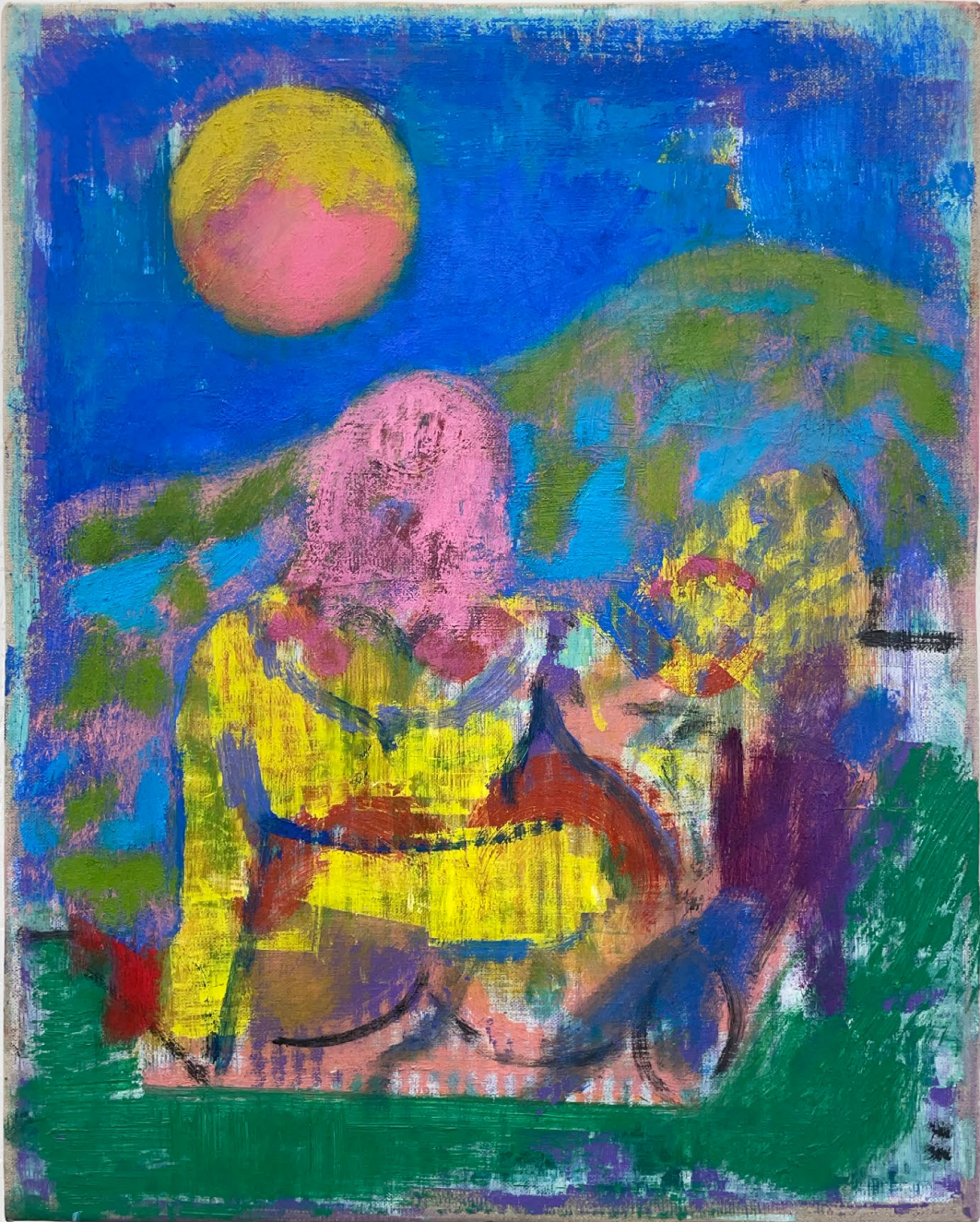
Coloratura, 2021

Oil on linen

32 x 26 in

81.3 x 66 cm

\$14,000



Michael Berryhill
Borderline, 2024
Oil on linen
20 x 16 in
50.8 x 40.6 cm

\$8,000



Michael Berryhill

Gloria, 2024

Oil on linen

20 x 16 in

50.8 x 40.6 cm

\$8,000

Art in America

Michael Berryhill

By Carrie Moyer September 1, 2014



Michael Berryhill: Coven Oven, 2014

Michael Berryhill has a most delicious way with paint. In “Beggars Blanket,” the second solo show at Kansas by the Brooklyn-based artist, Berryhill brought a heightened sense of color and tactility to his intimate consideration of life in the studio. Painted in a palette as sweet and chalky as Neco Wafers, nine easel-size paintings (all 2014) comprise a series of small tableaux set inside fanciful scaffolding. The template composition—a kind of flattened display case that conveys a sense of a Wunderkammer—

allows us to focus on Berryhill’s inventiveness and evident pleasure as he moves from one picture to the next.

At the entry to the gallery, a narrow vitrine layered with quick, palm-sized sketches offered a glimpse into the importance of drawing to Berryhill’s process. Roughed out in magic marker and pencil, the drawings depict a panoply of biomorphic forms, making explicit the strong current of Synthetic Cubism and Surrealism that ran through-

out the show. Here the white paper acts as a ground, punching out small pockets of space around individual shapes. The paintings, by comparison, are concerned with the idea of space rather than the illusion of it. Primary shapes, transposed from the drawings, are formed and then held in place by an interlocking jigsaw of grid, drapery and brushy daub.

Signs of the painter’s craft are crammed into Coven Oven, Axis of Easel and Palais de Lottery. In each, an abstract gestural flourish, thickly drawn diagram or bit of crosshatching holds as much weight of content as any of the more representational vignettes, such as mannequins, model stands and attenuated limbs. In Tabernacle Trapple there is a kind of narrative suggested in the relationship between the curious blue form holding center stage and the surrounding ochre and gray backdrop. Trimmed in red, the main “figure” morphs from tabletop sculpture to miniature altar to Cubist still-life without ever settling into one identity. Berryhill’s titles—goofy and self-conscious—feel contemporary, and act to temper what would otherwise be characterized as a serious love fest with mid-20th-century painting.

Berryhill’s surprising and truly particular color scheme and paint handling push these canvases to a distinctive level of sophistication and finesse. Reminiscent of vintage apparel and housewares of the 1930s and ’40s, the light palette combines soft grays and yellows with vibrant pinks, blues and greens, domesticating the grand historical themes and “masters” so central to a painter’s education. The paint application, too, has a decorative edge: using small brushes, Berryhill drags his colors over one another, creating a dry, optical mix on the textured linen surface. The joy in these paintings comes from the bon-vivant spirit of Berryhill’s homage—more Raoul Dufy than Pablo Picasso.



Michael Berryhill

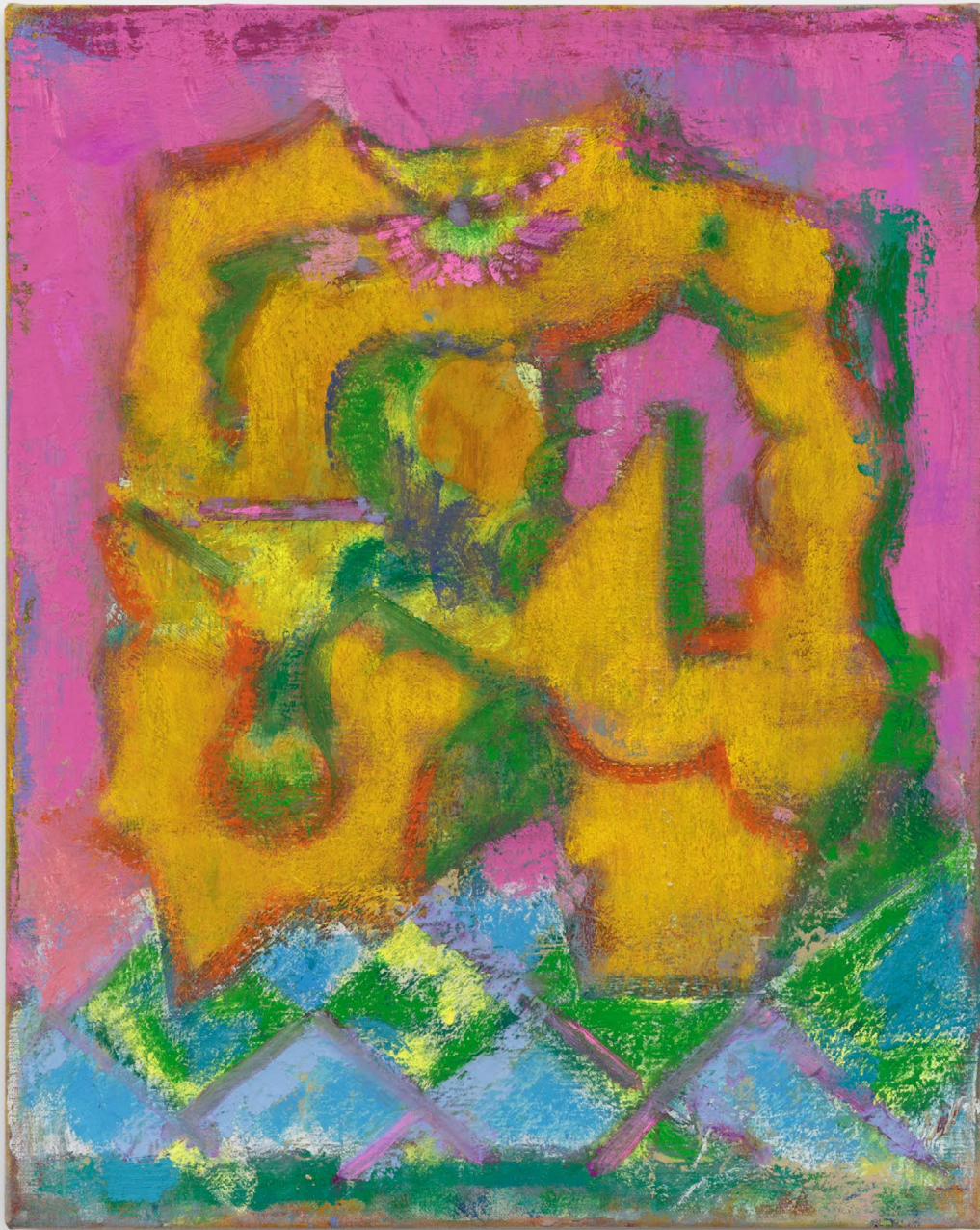
Hardcore, 2024

Oil on linen

16 x 20 in

40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$8,000



Michael Berryhill
Bedrock City, 2023
Oil on linen
20 x 16 in
50.8 x 40.6 cm

\$8,000

DIMIN

GALLERY

406 Broadway, Floor 2
New York, NY 10013
+1 646-398-8624
gallery@dimin.nyc

CONTACT

ROBERT DIMIN
Partner + Director
+1 917-445-7956
dimin@dimin.nyc

AUSTIN IVESON
Director
+1 917-757-4491
austin@dimin.nyc

