

MICHAEL KOHN GALLERY

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SHARON ELLIS: *RECENT PAINTINGS*

June 14 – August 9, 2025



Sharon Ellis, *Fairy Garden*, 2020, Alkyd on panel, 20 x 16 inches, Courtesy of Michael Kohn Gallery

“I feel that my work follows in the tradition of love for the natural world, obsession with the painted universes we create, and a reverence for the mystery of imagination itself. There will always be a place for a new image, another symbol for what it feels like to be immersed in the seasons and spectacles of the earth: alive to the beauty and also the danger in our universe.” - Sharon Ellis

Los Angeles, CA (May 29, 2025) – Michael Kohn Gallery is thrilled to present a collection of *Recent Paintings* by California-based artist Sharon Ellis. This exhibition of intimate, imaginative landscapes showcases Ellis’ affinity for the natural world, offering a visually poetic rendering of indescribable environmental phenomena and the earthly

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sublime through saturated colors, veinous lines, and masterful symmetry. Developed over five years, this new body of work is a highlight in a career spanning four decades. *Recent Paintings* opens on June 14 and will be on view through August 9, 2025.

The elements in Ellis' lush visions are cast like characters in a play. Through what the artist describes as a "completely irrational series of decisions," a simple focus on the time of day or season is transformed into an optical incantation. Ellis' romantic world features blankets of glimmering stars hovering over sinuous mountains, their folds rendered like draped fabric, or the scarlet hue of the harvest moon peeking through the vegetal gestures of towering trees. Works like *Fairy Garden*, the first of this series, are not representational; though they embody the spirit of camaraderie between nature and humans that transcends language.

Leah Ollman writes, "To describe *Fairy Garden* —or any of Ellis's paintings, really— strains language. It seems as though it shouldn't be so hard, because the forms declare themselves with unusual precision. The hues are radiant, vigorous. The surface is pristine, Ellis' ultra-soft brushes leaving no visible tracks. There is no vagueness or murky indecision. There are no false leads. But words comparably crisp, definitive and controlled miss the astonishing sense of surrender that the paintings attest to, and induce."

The reverie lies further in Ellis' immaculate planes; up to sixty layers of alkyd paint create impenetrable, luminous surfaces that hide all traces of the painter's hand. Ellis' abstractions owe as much to the physical process as to her artistic predecessors. Among her influences are painters Joseph Stella, Georgia O'Keeffe, Agnes Pelton, and Charles Burchfield. These early American modernists inherited the European traditions of Romantic landscape, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau but were intensely devoted to expanding the potential of abstraction in the pictorial realm. This radical ability to synthesize the conventions of naturalistic forms with inventive compositions is fundamental to Ellis' work.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sharon Ellis creates kaleidoscopic abstractions of the natural environment. Bridging the gap between 19th century Romantic painting and psychedelic art of the 1960's, Ellis identifies as a contemporary landscape painter. Stars and atmospheric phenomena are made active as shimmering agents that create a circuit of energy running throughout the entire picture plane. Ellis takes us on a trip through a hallucinatory landscape and illustrative network of flora and fauna.

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Ellis received her M.F.A. from Mills College in 1984, and her B.A. from University of California, Irvine. Her work is included in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, UT. Ellis' work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the world including: Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2022); Orange County Museum of Art Biennale (2022); Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (1993-2018); MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2016); the El Segundo Museum of Art; El Segundo, CA (2015); Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY (2011); The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2007); and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands (2000). Her work has also been reviewed by numerous publications, including The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and Art Review.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment in 1985 by Michael Kohn, Kohn Gallery has presented historically significant exhibitions in Los Angeles alongside exciting contemporary artists, creating meaningful contexts to establish links to a greater art historical continuum. Kohn Gallery represents important West Coast artists with long careers and rich histories such as Joe Goode, Lita Albuquerque, and Sharon Ellis, as well as the Estates of Bruce Conner, Wallace Berman, John Altoon and Martha Alf. Kohn Gallery boasts an expanding roster of emerging and mid-career artists including William Brickel, Alicia Adamerovich, Li Hei Di, Chiffon Thomas, Heidi Hahn, Jinbin Chen, Nir Hod, Siji Krishnan, Sophia Narrett, Shiwen Wang, Rosa Loy, and Mark Innerst. Visit kohngallery.com for the latest information on upcoming exhibitions.

Instagram: @KOHNGallery, @sharonellis_paintings, #SharonEllis #michaelkohngallery

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