

Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects 401 Broadway Suite 411 New York, NY 10013

Betsy Kaufman
Needlepoint

Opening Saturday, November 22, 5:00 to 7:00 pm
On view by appointment through January 31, 2026



Betsy Kaufman's tenth one-person show at the gallery includes fourteen complex geometric compositions, intricately stitched in brilliant colors in two and three dimensions.

For almost thirty years, she has created highly personal paintings and works on paper by subverting the minimalist orthodoxy of systems, seriality, and hard-edged geometry. A self-described “abstract expressionist,” she paints intuitively, with a lifelong passion for reading fiction underlying a process that she describes as “telling stories with surprises.” Emotional yet formal, spontaneous yet controlled, she uses color in a way that is as idiosyncratic as it is sophisticated.

In 2019, Kaufman brought her highly evolved sense of color and design to the practice of needlepoint which she took up as a way to remain creative while relaxing in the evening. She began by sewing on small blank canvases that she later finished in the form of visually striking pillows. As she began to experiment with unconventional shapes and increased scale, she no longer saw her pieces as functional “cushions” but rather as independent objects in the form of soft sculpture.

In March of 2020, with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, Kaufman temporarily moved from her home and studio in Tribeca to live full-time in upper Manhattan with her husband, the painter Mark Greenwold. There she found that needlepoint was the perfect alternative to painting, enabling her to pursue her longtime formal and conceptual concerns in a new medium. She continues to work intuitively, developing the designs and choosing the colors as she sews, often removing and replacing whole areas of thread as the pieces evolve.

The current exhibition, featuring fourteen framed works and one sculpture, follows our first presentation of Kaufman's textile-based works in 2022 that included 14 sculptures made in a range of eccentric shapes and sizes.

Betsy Kaufman was born in San Francisco and raised in the Bay Area. After earning a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, she arrived in New York in 1980 where she continues to live and work. She has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at museums and galleries in the US and Europe. Works by the artist are in the collections of many institutions and private individuals. A solo exhibition of her newest paintings, drawings, and selected earlier works remains on view at Bookstein Projects, New York through December 19, 2025.

Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects is located in Suite 411 at 401 Broadway on the northwest corner of Broadway and Walker Street in Tribeca. To arrange an appointment, please contact info@tonkonow.com