

# Anton Kern Gallery

## Aliza Nisenbaum *Flora*

For Immediate Release

September 9 – October 24, 2020

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to present Aliza Nisenbaum: *Flora*, an exhibition of new works on paper on the gallery's third floor.

Nisenbaum is best known for her portrait paintings, which are fundamentally studies about intimacy. She spends many hours getting to know her subjects: sitting with them in person, becoming a part of their communities, and learning about their lives. As this became an impossibility during the pandemic--unequipped with people, canvas, and paint--Nisenbaum turned to drawing from memory, previous paintings, studies, and photographs, taking it as an opportunity and challenge to deepen her approach to the abstraction of faces. She also turned to drawing flowers, inspired by daily long walks around her temporary new Los Angeles neighborhood. Throughout the anxiety of isolation, Nisenbaum found comfort in nature and the plants and flowers she discovered, which also provided further solace by reminding her of the vegetation of her place of birth, Mexico. During her walks, she stayed in touch over the phone with family and friends, and many former sitters. Thus, succulents, sunflowers, and lively bouquets populate the exhibition alongside familiar faces--an embodiment of the artist's multi-faceted new life and practice.

The works in *Flora* are presented as diptychs pairing these portraits of people with plants, becoming a way to symbolically send her subjects flowers. At the height of the pandemic in New York City, Nisenbaum thought and worried particularly of those friends and former sitters in immigrant communities who were especially vulnerable and in high-risk neighborhoods, yet felt helpless at the inability to offer a hug or some sort of simple token of warmth. The pairings create a symbiotic energy, both images equally rendered in loving detail by the artist: portrait and flower are imbued with palpable gestures of care and love. Particularly in such a moment of isolation, these diptychs become emblems of touch our current distancing can't fulfill.



Aliza Nisenbaum, *Self portrait bouquet*, 2020, gouache and watercolor on paper, Paper Dimensions: 30 x 22 in (76.2 x 55.9 cm)

10% of all proceeds from works sold in this exhibition will go to UnLocal's Immigrant Child Legal Services Project, Studio in a School NY, and The Weingart Center, Los Angeles.

Aliza Nisenbaum (b. 1977) was born and raised in Mexico City, and currently lives and works in New York City. She studied psychology at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico, and earned her BFA and MFA at the Art Institute of Chicago. The artist has served as Assistant Professor of Professional Practice in Visual Arts (Painting) at Columbia University School of the Arts since 2015.

Nisenbaum's forthcoming solo exhibition at the Tate Liverpool will open in December 2020, featuring a series of new portraits of health care and essential workers in the UK. In 2019 she completed a residency and public mural for the Art of the Underground Public Commission in London--the result of which will also feature in the Tate exhibition. In the US, she was recently the subject of a solo exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis in 2017. Her work has been included in many notable group exhibitions, including *When Home Won't Let You Stay, Migration Through Contemporary Art*, ICA Boston, MA; *City Prince/ess DHAKA, LAGOS, MANILA, MEXICO CITY and TEHRAN*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (both 2019); *One Day at a Time*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2018); she was also selected to participate in the 2017 Whitney Biennial. Her work is included in the collections of the Tate, the Aishti Foundation, The Hirshhorn Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others both private and public.

### Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday  
10am – 6pm

### Press Inquiries

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