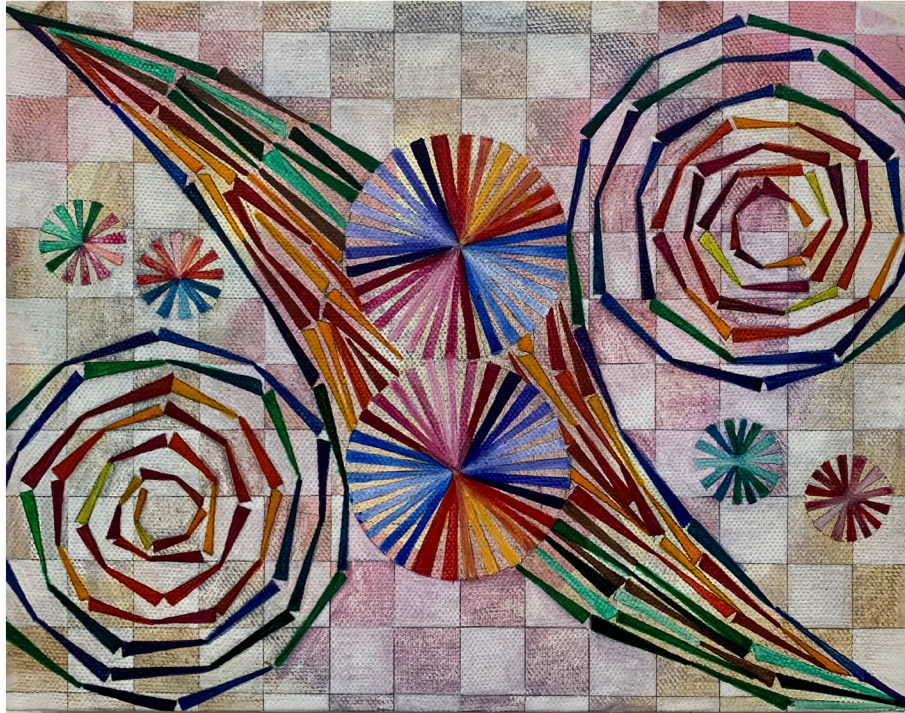


MARA HELD  
*FINGERS DIPPED IN HONEY*  
 March 15–April 19, 2025



*Pulling the Bow to Shoot the Arrow*, 2023

11 x 14 inches, egg tempera on linen over panel

Mara Held (b. 1954, New York) presents recent egg tempera paintings on linen in her first solo show at Seven Sisters. Twenty of the artist's delicately painted, intricately layered abstractions will be on view, all created during the past three years.

The exhibition's title, a phrase from a Rupi Kaur poem, *Fingers Dipped in Honey*, hints at Held's sensorial involvement with her paintings and symbolizes a life well-lived. Her methodical use of line and reverence for order reflects similar coordination of sequences and gestural fluidity, as seen in *Qigong*, a Chinese practice combining meditation, breathing, and gentle movements. In the vein of spiritual abstraction, her lyrical compositions navigate polyvalent space and inner narratives while invoking connections to nature, time, energy, and geometric symbolism. But just when balance seems to be the guiding force in her work, a closer look at her paintings reveals less order than constant change: more of an admiration for symmetry than an adherence. Because of its optical complexity, Held's work creates a web-like forcefield at peace with uncertainty, yielding to nature's insistence on defying a fixed state.

An admiration for early Renaissance painting inspired her dedication to painting with egg tempera, a labor-intensive medium. The artist's preparation process takes several weeks before she is ready to start painting—first applying a shellac moisture barrier to a wooden panel, which is then stretched with linen (first hand-washed), covered with two layers of rabbit skin glue, followed by eight layers of traditional ground. She makes her paints with a dispersion of raw pigment mixed with egg yolk, lavender oil, walnut oil, and some vinegar as a preservative. Her paintings vibrate with luminosity and transformation, perhaps

because, as Held has acknowledged, "there is no light like the light that exists in an egg—Life itself." Honey, too, is a bit of a marvel—coming out of a flurry of activity—an entire hive mind of bees and the chance of place and nectar to yield a sweet, sticky, and primordial fluid. Held's work reflects a spirit that honors individual paths through the universe and the interconnectedness of all life.

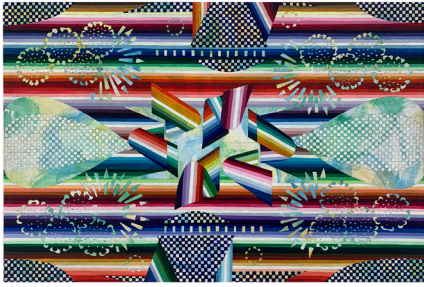
Mara Held lives and works in Boiceville, NY. She moved to the highlands of Guatemala in her early 20s to study the art and ancient language of the Quiché people. She received her undergraduate degree from CUNY-City University of New York and an MA from Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, California, before returning to New York in the 1980s. She first taught essay writing at the college level and became a full-time artist at 35. Her studio is on an old dairy farm in the picturesque Hudson Valley that has been in her family since the 1960s.

Institutions that have collected her work include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The New York Public Library; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; The International Artists' Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel; and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. The New York Times, Elle Décor, and The Brooklyn Rail have profiled Held's work. She was recently included in *Blurring Boundaries: The Women of American Abstract Artists, 1936-Present* (traveling exhibition 2018-2023: The Clara M. Eagle Gallery, Murray State University, Murray, KY, and the Ewing Gallery, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.) Although this is her first show with Seven Sisters, it is her fifth solo in Houston.

MARA HELD  
*FINGERS DIPPED IN HONEY*

INDEX OF WORKS\*

(\*all works are egg tempera on linen over panel)



*Goodness Like Water*, 2024  
 24 x 36 ¼ inches



*18 Movements*  
 2020  
 40 x 30 inches



*Monkey Beholding the Sky*, 2023  
 36 x 48 inches



*Gathering Fragrance*, 2023  
 32 x 35 ¾ inches



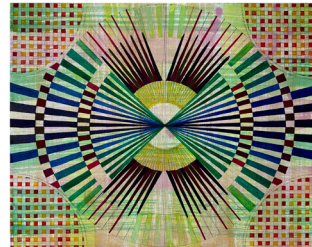
*Falling Tiger*  
 2024  
 11 x 14 inches



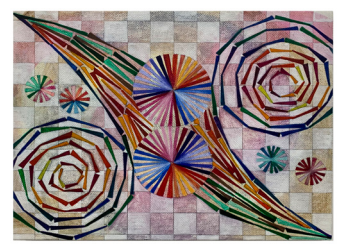
*Clutching Eagle*  
 2024  
 12 x 9 inches



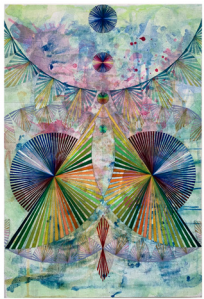
*Swimming Dragon*  
 2022  
 12 x 9 inches



*Flying Goose*  
 2024  
 16 x 24 inches



*Pulling the Bow to Shoot the Arrow*, 2023  
 11 x 14 inches



*Crane Drinking Water*, 2023  
 36 x 24 inches



*Red Pheasant*  
 2023  
 36 x 24 inches



*Bridle*  
 2025  
 20 x 16 inches



*Flying Hands*  
 2022  
 14 x 11 inches



*Kicking up Dust*  
 2024  
 14 x 11 inches



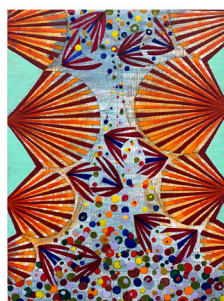
*8 Pieces of Brocade*  
 2022 \*  
 14 x 11 inches



*Ringing the Bell*,  
 2022  
 14 x 11 inches



*Demon Opening the Door*  
 2023  
 24 ¼ x 30 ¼ inches



*Wu Ji*  
 2022  
 12 x 9 inches



*Wind Rustling Leaves*, 2023  
 40 x 30 inches



*Shoot the Arrow/  
 Plunge the Sword*  
 2022 \*  
 48 x 32 inches