

CRITICS' PICKS

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New York

Billy Sullivan

KAUFMANN REPETTO | NEW YORK

535 West 22nd Street

March 31–April 30

In the intimate exhibition space of Billy Sullivan's flirty paintings and drawings, the air is charged with a tinge of the erotic. The room is a vibrating chamber of rumors, memories: We are privy to the artist's interior world, his tender relationships and various loves, both living and lost. Re-created from Sullivan's personal cache of photos, seven of the ten works on display are titled after their subjects, including Cookie Mueller (*Cookie*, 2016) and the artist's husband, Klaus Kertess (*Klaus and Klaus*, 2015–16). Sullivan's brushstrokes are gentle and effortless—details are hazy, contours contrast and blend. Lightly discordant color pairings like emerald and magenta, or sapphire and ocher, are sprinkled throughout—tones that call to mind Brooks Brothers' plaids, a strawberry ice cream in Provincetown, or the look of an East Hampton hedge while coming off a tab of ecstasy.

The pleasure of Sullivan's works comes in two distinct waves: first, from simply falling into their luscious, exquisite surfaces, and then bearing witness to all of the artist's posh friends from his haute milieu—this is a privileged gaze, full of scopophilic desire. This entwined sensation seems most palpable in *Klaus in Tulum*, 2003, where the titular curator is lying naked behind a sheer veil. Hypnotic pinky purples and lemon yellows embellish surrounding tiles and walls as if the atmosphere itself were painted, and this quality bleeds into the exhibition itself.

Sullivan's show pulsates like a circuit of gossip at a party, sexy and pleasurable.



Billy Sullivan, *Klaus in Tulum*, 2003, oil on canvas, 72 x 52 1/2".

— Taro Masushio