

ARTHUR KERN



reception march 5th 6-8

HORSES

In his first commercial gallery exhibition in more than four decades, artist Arthur Kern presents a suite of hauntingly lyrical cast-resin sculptures, dazzling in their technical mastery and thematic sophistication. The exhibition gathers together Kern's equestrian sculptures, a genre whose elemental forms recall Etruscan statuary, Greco-Roman bas-relief, and the modernist panache of Marino Marini—all channeled through Kern's profoundly individualistic sensibility. "There's such a history between humans and horses," the artist reflects. "Not only have they gotten us from one place to another, they've also worked our fields, fought our wars, and done so much of our work. There's a richness in that relationship."

Born 90 years ago in New Orleans, Kern earned his B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees in painting from Tulane University in the mid-1950s and studied privately at the McCrady Art School on Bourbon Street. As a painter he had solo shows at Ruth White Gallery in New York and was curated into a 1962 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, yet despite these successes, he was called by another muse, sculpture. In 1967 he set his inventory of paintings ablaze in a bonfire, dedicating his remaining years to three-dimensional work. He also radically distanced himself from the financial and social pressures of the art market, refraining from exhibiting his work for the better part of forty years. Creating sculptures solely for his own eyes allowed his artistic voice to develop with complete independence, organicism, and integrity. In 2016 he reemerged with *Arthur Kern: The Surreal World of a Reclusive Sculptor* at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, which earned praise in *The New York Times* ("exquisite...surreal...striking..."), *The New York Review* ("...mesmerizing..."), and *The Advocate* ("...a singular artist whose work deserves to be much better known..."). Critics were fascinated by his challenging symbolic imagery and the time-intensive process he adapted from the ancient lost-wax method, using a highly responsive polyester resin and intricately lacquered patinas.

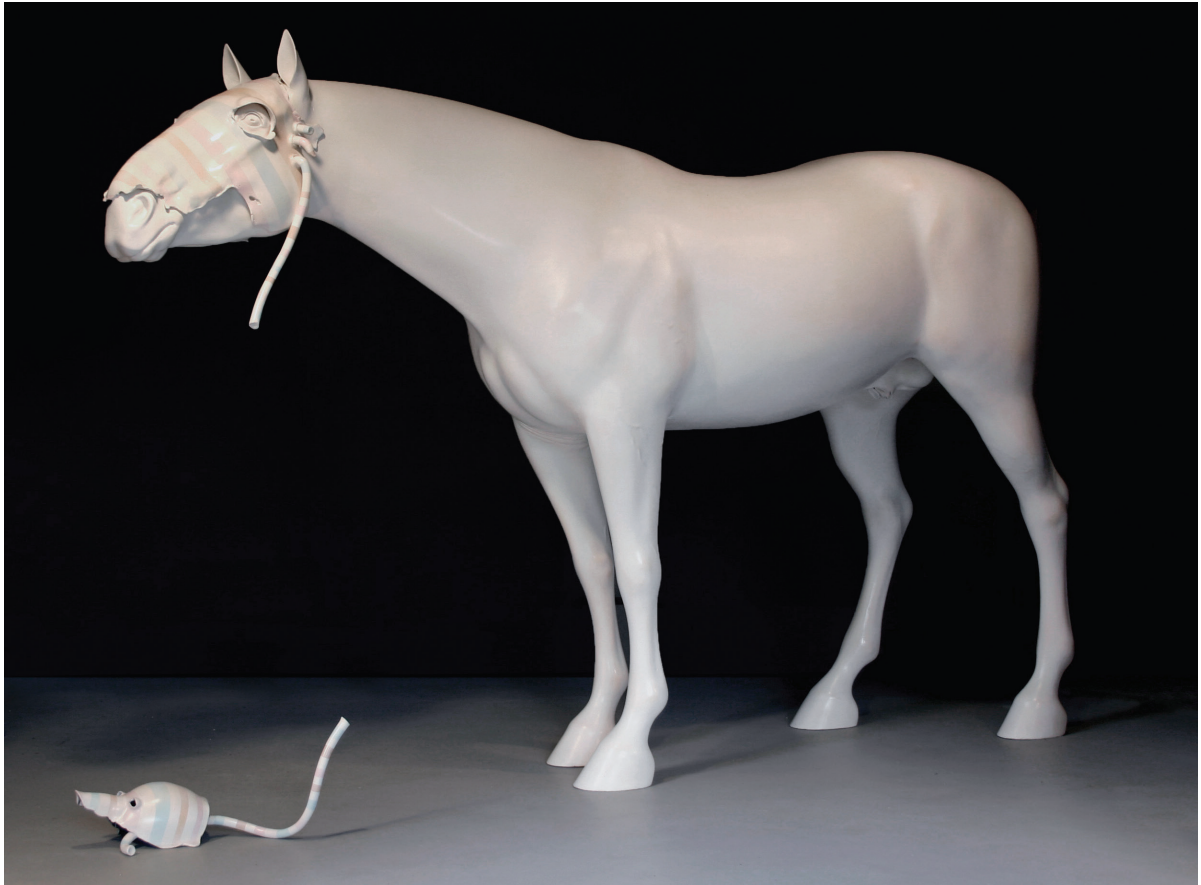
The sculptures presented at Callan Contemporary are one-of-a-kind, not editions, and range the length of Kern's career. Although critics have placed them in the lineages of Surrealism and postmodernism, the artist feels they spring from a syntax of "my own myths," along with aspects of Zen Buddhism and Existentialist philosophy. The smaller pieces are bravura variations on a single original form, their surfaces alternately textural or preternaturally smooth. The two life-sized works weave narratives that unfold in the viewer's imagination, evoking the symbiotic cooperation of human and horse while encapsulating the artist's unique aesthetic, which curator Herman Mhire calls "at once poetic, sublime, disturbing, magnetic, and beautiful."

Richard Speer

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, MARCH 5th 6-8 PM

EXHIBITION DATES: MARCH 3rd - APRIL 23rd, 2022

Front Cover: *Sunday Cruise*, polychromed resin, 12" x 13.5" x 4"



Circus II, polychromed resin, 78" x 98" x 36"



Dance on Trigger, polychromed resin, 11" x 17" x 9"



Ring One Streaker, polychromed resin, 15" x 14.5" x 7"



Auntie Who, polychromed resin, 13" x 11" x 5"



Warrior's Wife, polychromed resin, 12" x 11.5" x 4"

CALLAN CONTEMPORARY

518 Julia Street | New Orleans, LA 70130



Silent Myth (detail), polychromed resin, 87" x 88" x 26"

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