

I N M A N G A L L E R Y

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 24, 2022

Inman Gallery is pleased to
present

Gilad Efrat
Ping Pong

March 26 – May 26, 2022

Opening reception:
Saturday, March 26, 2:00–4:00pm



Gilad Efrat, *In Between*, 2020
oil on canvas, diptych
102 ³/₈ x 141 ³/₄ x 2 in (260 x 360 x 5 cm)

Inman Gallery is pleased to present ***Ping Pong***, an exhibition of recent paintings by Gilad Efrat, opening on Saturday, March 26, with a reception from 2:00–4:00pm. The exhibition is concurrent with **Carl Suddath: *Aporia*** and will run through May 26. The show, Efrat’s sixth solo exhibition with Inman Gallery, includes two monumental paintings accompanied by three medium-to-large works. Diptychs predominate and play with the visual effect of doubling or mirroring, a call and response between two panels referenced in the title “Ping Pong.”

Ping Pong continues Efrat’s exploration into a distinct painterly approach which began in 2014, creating vibrant and energized abstract works that follow the tradition of Action Painting. Entering the exhibition, viewers are confronted with walls of highly saturated colors in angular, sweeping overlapping blocks, interspersed with frenzied marks inset into the paint. Painting with intensity and urgency, Efrat manipulates overlapping layers of wet paint to simultaneously build up the surface and remove paint to reveal an image before the paint dries, all within the span of two to three days. In doing so Efrat’s paintings have a self-referential archaeological nature, an active excavation in their own creation. They capture speed and life itself.

The use of diptychs further extends the energy and liveliness present in these works, the title “Ping Pong” evoking the reverberation of an aesthetic or idea bouncing back and forth from panel to panel, like a ball bounces from player to player. The reference to sport is not only conceptually resonant but formally concrete, as the two mid-size diptychs *Ping Pong 4*, *Cave* and *Ping Pong 1*, *Cup of Poison* share the same dimensions as a ping pong table. Though not identical to one another, each panel visually echoes its pair, mimicking the shapes and colors from one side to the next, and continuing lines across the canvas edge from one panel to another.

Efrat’s choice to work in diptychs was initially a pragmatic one, as a single canvas the scale of *A Day* or *In Between* (the two largest works in the show) simply wouldn’t fit in his studio. However, the

artist's experimentation in diptychs soon took on a conceptual meaning. A dual artwork – a single painting of two serial canvases – subverts the notion that an artwork must exist in singularity to be considered authentic (perhaps even more so in the case of action paintings, which uphold the artist's unique movement and unique hand as crucial to the work's aura). Duality exists prominently in Efrat's work, from the tension of both adding and removing paint, to the immense scale that necessitates both viewer and artist to move to see the work in its entirety. Even his choice of abstraction activates the duality of internal cognition and external perception, as our mind looks for figuration to make sense of what our eyes know to be abstract, not unlike seeing shapes in cloud formations. Here Efrat's paintings hold space for complexity, expansiveness, and contradiction.

Yet above all Efrat's paintings are about materiality. The thick surface makes us aware of the physicality of paint itself, paint as substance with malleable properties and material limitations. Efrat's reductive process captures the physical act of creation, the time and space of the event suspended in the stratigraphy of dried paint, recalling the artist's own body in motion. The scale of the works, which tower above and engulf the viewer, become larger-than-life objects that make obvious the viewer's own physicality. The complexity of the surface invites a viewer to stand close and marvel in the paint's materiality. But to actually see the piece in its entirety, the viewer must walk backwards into the work on the opposing wall, forcing us to engage physically with the work. The viewer is activated not just in the eyes but in body, in space. The mass of Gilad's paintings mirrors our own mass, its bodily presence making us aware of our own as we inhabit a shared physical reality. Bouncing back and forth from painting to painting, zooming in only to zoom out, we ourselves become energized, playing a game of visual ping pong suspended in equilibrium.

The exhibition is accompanied by a text by Jonathan Hirschfeld entitled "Ping Pong." It was translated from Hebrew by Orr Scharf.

Special event Saturday, March 26, 1:00pm

The artist will be in conversation with Joseph Havel at 1:00 pm, with a reception to follow for the artists from 2-4 pm.

Gilad Efrat (b. 1969, Beer-Sheva, Israel) received a BFA from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem, in 1995 and an MFA from the same institution in 2003. From 2004-2006 he lived in Houston, TX, while participating in the Core Artist-in-Residence Program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Efrat has been included in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Europe, the US and Israel, including *Ape Scape*, Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Israel (2010), *Common Place*, Galleria Oredaria Arti Contemporanee, Rome (2008), *Archeological Site*, St. Augustine Church, Erfurt, Germany (2004), three solo exhibitions at the Noga Gallery of Contemporary Art, Tel-Aviv (2000, 2002, 2004), and five solo exhibitions at Inman Gallery in Houston, Texas (2006, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017). A leading contemporary painter in Israel, Efrat was most recently the subject of a large-scale solo exhibition at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, titled *Gilad Efrat: Inside Painting*, which was on view from mid-July 2019 – mid January, 2020.

Efrat lives and works in Tel-Aviv where he is a Professor at the Shenkar College of Engineering and Design.