
Michael Kagan

To The Moon

Artist | Michael Kagan
Exhibition Title | *To The Moon*
Dates | October 29 (Sat.) – November 23 (Wed.), 2022
Location | MAKI Gallery / Tennoz II, Tokyo



Michael Kagan, *Astronaut*, 2021, lacquered, mirror-polished, and glass bead-blasted bronze cast, 205.0 x 120.0 x 113.0 cm

MAKI Gallery is pleased to present *To The Moon*, Brooklyn-based artist Michael Kagan's first solo presentation in Japan, at Tennoz II, Tokyo. The exhibition features paintings, sculptures, and works on paper all referencing iconic moments from the first and last crewed missions to the Moon: Apollo 11 and Apollo 17. The diverse selection of works tactfully yet breathlessly unveil a story of challenge and triumph that resonates deeply with our collective memory.

Central to the show are two monumental sculptures which epitomize the artist's recent foray into three-dimensional media. *Apollo* is the artist's interpretation of the Apollo 11 capsule, a detachable portion of

the spacecraft designed to bring its crew safely back to Earth. Notably, it is the only piece of the Apollo 11 rocket that survived the trip—Kagan treats the capsule as a hero in its own right, with the reverence as one would a religious relic. While the Moon landing is considered one of the most extraordinary feats in human history, *Apollo* frames the astronauts' safe return as an equally miraculous achievement.

Astronaut is a cast bronze sculpture of Apollo 17 commander Gene Cernan, famously known as the "last man on the Moon." It is modeled after a painting Kagan created in 2018, which itself was based on an iconic photograph of Cernan taken during a moonwalk. The larger-than-life statue looms over the viewer with an imposing, almost intimidating aura, while its weighty form is complicated by interweaving blocks, inspired by the thick, geometric strokes Kagan employs in his paintings. Although the artist is referencing a specific snapshot of history, the astronaut's mirror-polished visor and bulky space suit obscure the identity of the man within. Thus, the sculpture is able to simultaneously serve as a symbolic tribute to the boundless potential of humankind.



Installation view, artwork, left to right:

Michael Kagan, *Apollo*, 2021, polyresin, fiberglass, and steel, 249.0 x 175.3 x 249.0 cm

Michael Kagan, *Aldrin*, 2021, oil on linen, 61.0 x 61.0 cm

The mythos of the Apollo missions is further enhanced by the other works on view. Twelve enamel prints on paper show the Apollo 11 liftoff in a sequential manner; the rocket is gradually smothered by dynamic squeegee marks, illustrating not only physical motion but also the heightened anticipatory energy of the event. In addition, a series of six oil and enamel-printed paintings depict the first footprint on the Moon—an epochal image that represents an unforgettable moment observed by over 600 million people worldwide. Showcased alongside these serial works are Kagan's signature oil-on-linen paintings. While they may read as carefully arranged abstract compositions up close, when viewed from a distance, the whirlwind of lines, shapes, and colors merge into a single recognizable image—the astronaut.

December 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of Apollo 17, the last time we have ever set foot on the Moon. Over three short years between 1969 and 1972, a total of six crewed missions have completed the trip. Although public interest and investment in space travel has since waned, these moments continue to hold a unique place in our collective memory. *To The Moon* plays into the nostalgic elements of its subject matter while looking to the future, expressing a sincere excitement for what humanity will achieve next.



Michael Kagan, *Footprint II*, 2022
Oil and enamel on linen
61.0 x 61.0 cm

Michael Kagan, *Apollo 11 (Rocket VI)*, 2022
Enamel on paper
76.2 x 50.8 cm



Michael Kagan

Born in 1980 in Virginia, Michael Kagan completed his BA at The George Washington University in 2003, followed by an MFA and postgraduate fellowship at the New York Academy of Art in 2005. Currently based in Brooklyn, New York, Kagan's praxis centers on a continued exploration of the tension between abstraction and representation, particularly through the medium of oil-painting. Rhythmical, abstract brushstrokes in both bright and muted hues coalesce at a distance to form iconic, high-contrast images of man defying the limits of possibility whether astronauts, rocket launches, surfers, or mountain peaks. Kagan's recent solo exhibitions include *It Lasts Forever*, Almine Rech Gallery (London, 2022); *How We Remember*, Almine Rech Gallery (Brussels, 2021); *It's Never Over*, Over the Influence (Hong Kong, 2021); *We Have Felt The Ground Shake*, Bill Brady Gallery (Miami, 2018); and *Summit Push*, Half Gallery (New York, 2017). He has also participated in various group exhibitions in the US and Europe. The artist held his first museum show, *I Was There When It Happened*, at Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art in 2019.

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Closed on Sundays and Mondays

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