

## John Bjerklie

French Curve Gallery and Kingsbury Gallery at Grace and Peace Fellowship

May 31, 2024 - July 28, 2024

By Troy Sherman

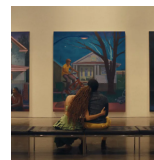
July 16, 2024 11:14 am



John Bjerklie, *Untitled (Trinity)*, ca. 1986, acrylic on plywood and canvas, 52 x 60".

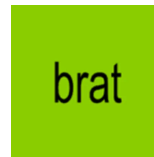
John Bjerklie (1953–2024), raised a Christian in Maine, came to Saint Louis in 1977 to study painting at Washington University. By the time he moved to New York in 1988, his style had progressed: from a student's Fauvist studies to geometric abstractions and collaged canvases and, eventually, to tight, energized combines full of comma- and kidney-shaped forms. Across two venues featuring twenty-five works, "The St. Louis Years" presents a range of the artist's Midwestern output. Fittingly, one of these sites is a gallery on the second floor of a Presbyterian church: Bjerklie's faith suffused his art, lending even his more lighthearted polka-dotted arrangements an air of gravity and deliberation.

## MOST READ



INTERVIEWS

TITUS KAPHAR



MUSIC

GREEN IS THE BRATTEST COLOR

### Your Privacy Rights

Penske Media Corporation (PMC) uses first and third-party cookies, pixels, scripts and similar technologies to enable PMC and third-party service providers and partners to collect information about you and your interactions with our sites and services (including clicks, cursor movement and screen recordings). Learn more about our practices and your choices in our [Privacy Policy](#). By continuing to use our sites or services, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#) (including the class action [waiver](#) and [arbitration](#) provisions) and Privacy Policy, which have recently changed.

plywood blocks, sloppily painted and separated into three vertical

**ARTFORUM**



READ NEXT: VIKTOR NEUMANN TO LEAD GERMANY'S BONNER...

SUBSCRIBE



panels. The left stripe features white scythes dotted with black; the

middle one is made up of white-and-red triangles, and the right comprises truncated ovoids decked out with stubby crucifixes. Its slipshod construction belies a real seriousness of design, particularly recognizable at junctures where the bands collide. Whether the painting addresses God's consubstantiality or symbolizes the realms of heaven, earth, and hell, the way its segments intermingle suggests not just an overall coherence of structure, but a sense of spiritual unity, an aspect that is prevalent throughout all of Bjerklie's art.

Many of *Trinity's* most compelling features are present in some combination in almost every work in the exhibition. Idiosyncratic shapes, physical paint handling, and depths achieved by the layering of many planes characterize the fuzzy still lifes as well as the cut-and-collaged canvases. Bjerklie was an artist who would have ideas and nurture them, sometimes for years, as if to honor their source by proving how supple even His smallest gifts could be.

MORE:

CRITICS' PICKS | JOHN BJERKLIE

## Artforum Inbox

Register to receive our full menu of newsletters—*From the Archive*, *Must See*, *Video*, *In Print*, *Dispatch*, and *ArtforumEDU*—as well as special offers from *Artforum*.

**SIGN UP**

PMC

## MOST POPULAR

**VARIETY**

1. Robert Downey Jr. Confronts Elon Musk 'Cosplaying Tony Stark' By Saying: 'I Just Wish He Would Control His Behavior a Little More'



**billboard**

### Your Privacy Rights

Penske Media Corporation (PMC) uses first and third-party cookies, pixels, scripts and similar technologies to enable PMC and third-party service providers and partners to collect information about you and your interactions with our sites and services (including clicks, cursor movement and screen recordings). Learn more about our practices and your choices in our [Privacy Policy](#). By continuing to use our sites or services, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#) (including the class action [waiver](#) and [arbitration](#) provisions) and Privacy Policy, which have recently changed.