

# ANDREW RAFACZ

info@andrewrafacz.com  
+ 312 404 9188

1749 West Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60622

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Contact:

Jenal Dolson  
+ 312 404 9188  
jenal@andrewrafacz.com  
www.andrewrafacz.com

Chicago, IL, November 1, 2024 – ANDREW RAFACZ is excited to announce *The Darker the Night, the Brighter the Stars*, a solo exhibition of new paintings from Cindy Bernhard, in Galleries One & Two. The exhibition opens Friday, November 1st and continues through Saturday, December 21st, 2024. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

*The Darker the Night, the Brighter the Stars* presents a series of new oil paintings on canvas from Cindy Bernhard. Employing dramatic shifts between light and dark, ecstatic colors and mystical imagery, Bernhard creates her own fantastic, albeit representative world.

Referencing a line from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the title of Bernhard's exhibition points directly to her ongoing investigation of mysticism and the search for truth by way of her own evolving spirituality.

At the center of the exhibition is *The Dark Night of the Soul*, a six by ten-foot painting set in an imagined version of the artist's studio, titled after the 16<sup>th</sup> century poem of the same name by St. John of the Cross. The poem addresses a phase of passive purification of the spirit within mystical development. Colloquially, the phrase "dark night of the soul" is used to describe a crisis of faith or a difficult, painful period in one's life.

The vibrant, layered scene contains several paintings-within-the-painting in varying stages of completion (a seemingly blank canvas capturing the shadows of the room, a completed one on an easel) as well as the artist's tools of her work— tubes of paints, brushes, a palette and jars— on a table and a rolling cart. Two cats— stand-ins for human subjects— are engaged in mysterious and playful acts. Catching the drama of the studio *in media res*, the viewer is inundated in Bernhard's familiar interactions between light and shadow, interior and exterior. Her meta-painting *mise-en-scène* recalls other historical paintings of self-reflexivity and reflection, such as Velasquez' *Las Meninas* or Vermeer's *The Allegory of Painting*. Although the artist is physically absent from the scene, her presence is undoubtedly felt.

Bernhard has also shifted scale with this exhibition, counterbalancing her largest work to date with her smallest. A series of intimately-sized canvases respond to the epic tableau of *The Dark Night of the Soul* with focused depictions of lit candles, caves, plumes of smoke, flowing water and vessels — imagery often found in her larger paintings but distilled here into an elemental language. Representing air, earth, fire and water, Bernhard focuses on these singular charged images, prioritizing a visceral sense of the primal and sublime in the everyday, which frequently defines the artist's work. For Bernhard, it is an attempt to reset and get back to something more primary, both in her painting practice and her metaphysical pursuits.

**CINDY BERNHARD** (American, b. 1989) lives and works in Chicago, IL. Bernhard received her MFA from Laguna College of Art and Design in 2014 and her BFA from the American Academy of Art in 2011. Recent and upcoming solo exhibitions include ANDREW RAFACZ (Chicago, IL), Long Story Short (New York, NY), Richard Heller Gallery (Santa Monica, CA), Monya Rowe Gallery (New York, NY), Shelter In Place Gallery (Boston, MA), and Vital Signs (Milwaukee, WI). Group exhibitions include ANDREW RAFACZ (Chicago, IL), Steven Zevitas Gallery (Boston, MA), Casa Santa Ana (Panama City, Panama), PLATO (Brooklyn, NY), Monya Rowe Gallery (New York, NY), Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (Chicago, IL), Carlye Packer (Palm Springs, CA), Richard Heller Gallery (Santa Monica, CA), Field Projects (New York, NY), Eve Leibe Gallery (London, UK), Lubeznik Center For The Arts (Michigan City, IN), Hyde Park Art

Center (Chicago, IL), One After 909 (Chicago, IL), and the Bridgeport Art Center (Chicago, IL). She has exhibited at art fairs in Chicago, Miami, New York, and Palm Springs. Her work has been written about in many publications, including New American Paintings, New York Magazine, and Newcity. Bernhard's work is collected nationally and internationally.