

I Want to Believe Karla Knight by Phillip Edward Spradley - New York



Installation view, Orbit, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, 2026. Courtesy of Andrew Edlin Gallery.

By PHILLIP EDWARD SPRADLEY MAY 29, 2026

The first thing one notices in Karla Knight's work is not the imagery itself, but the sense that the imagery is patiently and persistently attempting to organize experience into meaning. Knight's meticulousness recording of symbols, diagrams, stitched constellations, and recurring motifs appear less like illustrations than fragments of a larger cosmology whose full logic remains just out of reach, yet still carries an unmistakable sense of significance.

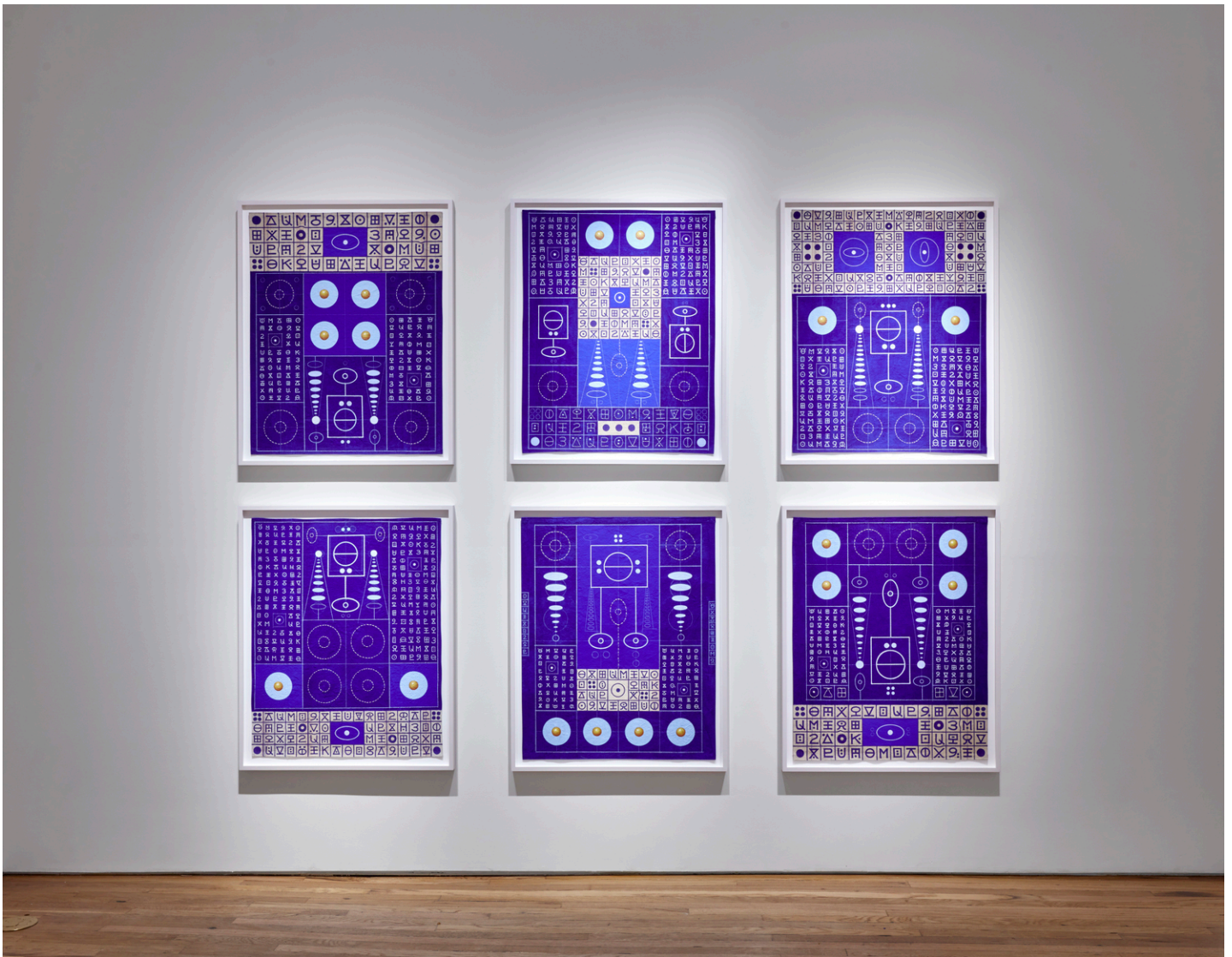
At Andrew Edlin Gallery, *Orbit*, Knight's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, unfolds with a deliberate quietness. Nothing announces itself dramatically. Instead, the exhibition accumulates slowly through repetition, rhythm, and attention. Works on paper, textiles, and sculptural arrangements build an atmosphere somewhere between archive, science lab, and devotional space.



Installation view, Orbit, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, 2026. Courtesy of Andrew Edlin Gallery.

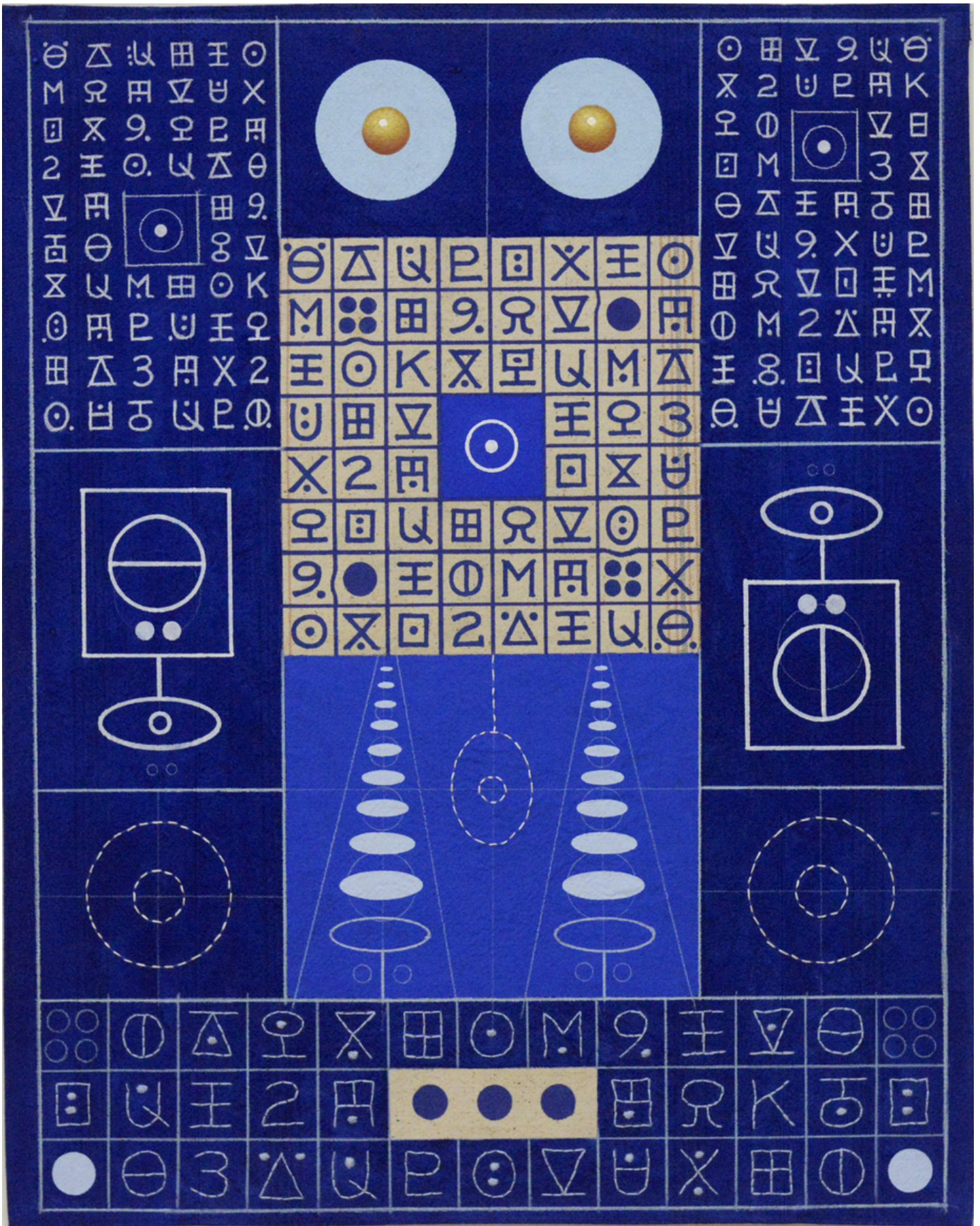
Since the 1980s, Knight has developed a visual vocabulary that borrows equally from mysticism, science, mapping systems, spiritual diagrams, and personal notation. Her compositions often resemble coded charts or speculative instructions, yet they resist settling into any stable system of interpretation. Symbols recur across surfaces as though carrying fixed meanings, but the longer one spends with them, the more fluid they become.

That instability is central to the exhibition's pull. The eye instinctively searches for patterns: repeated circles, directional arrows, clusters of handwritten text, arrangements that resemble astronomical charts or biological studies. But Knight does not reward interpretation in the conventional sense. There is no singular key hidden beneath the surfaces. Instead, the work redirects attention toward the act of looking itself, toward the strange pleasure of remaining inside uncertainty.



Installation view, Orbit, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, 2026. Courtesy of Andrew Edlin Gallery.

The exhibition's strongest moments emerge through that sustained viewing. In the series *Blue Libra* (2024–25), a deep blue dexaptych is installed with measured precision, rows of marks and symbolic forms unfold across paper like an elaborate recording system. The arrangement feels almost clinical at first, as though documenting information from an unknown discipline. Yet the closer one looks, the less fixed the system appears. Small irregularities, shifts in texture, and hand-drawn deviations interrupt any impression of complete order. The work oscillates between control and improvisation.



Karla Knight, *Blue Libra 2*, 2024-25. Fabric dye, flashe, acrylic marker, pencil, and embroidery on cotton, 35 x 28 inches. Courtesy of Andrew Edlin Gallery.

Materially, Knight's surfaces carry a sense of duration. Stitching, layering, and accumulated marks make the works feel built rather than simply composed. Their textures suggest revision, return, and prolonged attention. Even when the imagery leans toward diagrammatic clarity, the handmade quality of the surfaces resists detachment. The works remain intimate despite their cosmological ambitions.



Installation view, Orbit, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, 2026. Courtesy of Andrew Edlin Gallery.

A smaller adjoining room gathers books, stones, sketches, and fragments of process into what initially reads as explanatory context. Yet these objects ultimately deepen the exhibition's ambiguity rather than resolve it. They function less as evidence than as extensions of Knight's sensibility, reinforcing the impression that her work operates through association rather than conclusion. The installation suggests research, but research directed toward intuition as much as knowledge. Language

enters the exhibition directly in works such as *Little Orbit Drawing I* (2026), where handwritten phrases drift among abstract forms and celestial motifs. Again, text refuses explanatory authority. Words operate atmospherically, expanding the speculative tone of the imagery rather than clarifying it. The result is a body of work that hovers continuously between communication and opacity.

Knight's recurring orbs become especially important within this structure. Appearing throughout the exhibition in varying scales and contexts, they function as visual anchors without stabilizing into singular symbols. At times they evoke planets, cells, or eyes; elsewhere they feel purely diagrammatic. Their repetition creates continuity across the exhibition while preserving openness. They seem to signify presence itself more than any fixed idea.

By the time one leaves *Orbit*, interpretation itself begins to feel secondary. What lingers instead are rhythms: the spacing of symbols, the density of marks, the repetition of circular forms, the sensation of moving through a system that continually opens outward rather than closing in. Knight's work ultimately proposes a slower mode of attention, one in which meaning emerges not through resolution but through sustained looking. I could argue, the exhibition's real subject may not be aliens, ancient civilizations, or the cosmos at all, but perception itself: the strange human urge to keep searching the sky and the ground for signs that we are not alone, not first, not finished. Like many aspects of life, paying attention pays off. Here, it pays in wonder.

PHILLIP EDWARD SPRADLEY

Karla Knight, *Orbit*

Andrew Edlin Gallery

May 2 - June 13, 2026