

Karla Knight: *Orbit*

May 2 - June 13, 2026

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present *Orbit*, our fourth solo exhibition for Karla Knight.

There is something uniquely human about the desire to make sense of the world. We learn almost from birth that symbols stand in for something else, letters form words, and words come together to convey meaning. It's unsurprising, then, that when looking at the clear signs and symbols in abstract art by figures like Hilma af Klint, viewers become convinced that hidden messages await.

The first time I saw paintings by Karla Knight, I had such a moment of conviction. This was at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut during Knight's 2021-22 solo show, *Navigator*. Surely, I thought, these shapes, signs, letters, and glyphs the artist uses tell a story. They are rendered with clarity: neatly ordered arrangements like a code or relic from an archaeological dig conducted somewhere between the future and the distant past. The works' surfaces bear what has become Knight's signature lexicon: floating otherworldly orbs, diagrammatic constellations, and a script of characters that appear simultaneously insistently meaningful and stubbornly opaque. Knight's works beg to be interpreted.

Over the years, Knight's commitment to her invented language seems only to have grown and evolved as new characters emerge and symbols proliferate. *Orbit* contains works filled with rows and columns of symbols, like *Feelers* (2025-26) and examples from the *Blue Libra* series. In *Unusual Stars* (2025-26), Knight has included lists of nonsensical words and spaceship-like objects that seem to be sending a signal in black and gold orbs. Surely such organized symbols must mean something? Suggestions of science also appear, but her science seems to be one based on loose facts, more of a personal and playful interpretation—she even titled a work *Fun With Science* (2025-26). Yet all of Knight's characters are precisely that, playful inventions loosely based on reality.

Orbit includes a laboratory-like room offering a glimpse into her mind with objects like rocks and books, as well as drawings and studies for her paintings. Even with this view into her inner thoughts, however, the meaning of Knight's work is as nebulous as ever. Perhaps she is simply more open-minded to parallel levels of the world beyond that which we can see every day. Indeed, raised in a household attuned to the occult and the paranormal—her father wrote about UFOs and the afterlife—Knight absorbed early on the notion that unseen forces might shape reality as much as visible ones.

And yet, despite any hinted meaning, Knight's work does not distinguish between the empirical and the mystical. Diagrams resemble charts, but their logic remains elusive; symbols suggest language, but refuse to resolve into meaning. The result is a kind of epistemological suspension, in which the viewer is invited to inhabit uncertainty rather than overcome it. Sitting with this uncertainty is the hard part for some, but not for Knight it seems. Even she doesn't know if there is meaning to the language and symbols she invents.

What distinguishes Knight from preceding visionary artists—she is often compared to figures like Hilma af Klint—is not simply her iconography but her method of accumulation. Her paintings feel iterative, even recursive, as though each work were both a continuation and a revision of the last. Motifs reappear in altered form; orbs, spaceships, and satellites migrate across surfaces; colors shift but never quite settle. Knight's work seems to unfold over time, not linearly but concentrically, like rings forming around a center that remains just out of reach.

To stand before one of Knight's works is to experience a peculiar kind of attention, one that oscillates between scrutiny and surrender. Up close, the details proliferate: the texture of fabric, the delicacy of

lines, the irregularity of hand-drawn characters that seem to embody subtly distinct personalities. Step back, and these elements cohere into something like a system, though one that never fully declares itself. The viewer is left in a state of productive disorientation, aware that meaning is present but unwilling to resolve into certainty.

In an art world often preoccupied with legibility—political, theoretical, or otherwise—Knight’s work insists on the value of the unknowable. Her work does not so much communicate as it proposes: that there are forms of knowledge that cannot be decoded, only encountered. And that, in the end, may be their most enduring appeal. After all, if she is as mystified as the viewer, then maybe it’s not about the meaning of the work, but rather the experience of searching, of gazing, of letting the mind wander. Isn’t the possibility of something more, something waiting to be discovered, what makes the universe a magical expanse? Perhaps what Knight shows is that it’s a gift to be curious, to ask questions, to stare into the unknown, and to embrace uncertainty.

- Annabel Keenan

Karla Knight’s work has been widely shown, most recently at *Once Within a Time*, 12th International at SITE Santa Fe, curated by Cecilia Alemani (2025-26), and *Transe* at Gomide & Co., São Paulo. Her solo exhibition, *Navigator*, at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (Ridgefield, CT) in 2021-22 was accompanied by a monograph written by Amy Smith-Stewart, and a second edition was published in 2023 with an essay by Cassie Packard. Her art is included in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Modern Art (New York), and the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis). She has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, among them, The MacDowell Colony, Yaddo Corporation, and two Connecticut Artist Fellowships.