

KEVIN BERLIN

FRESH TOMATOES!

BY BARONESSE LOUISE VON DÜESTERLOHE

*Mini Art Interview with Kevin Berlin,
"Fresh Tomatoes!" at Hamptons Fine Art Fair*

Kevin Berlin's *Fresh Tomatoes!* recently featured at Hamptons Fine Art Fair, from July 14 to July 17, follows the Renaissance tradition of painting from life as the basis for expression and the development of ideas. While most of us are inspired to eat Italy's famous tomatoes, the artist was inspired to paint them.

While Kevin Berlin is perhaps best known for oil paintings and monumental bronze sculptures, these gouache and pencil works have a spontaneity and directness that can't be achieved any other way. Varieties of Italian tomatoes found in the paintings include San Marzano, Sicilian ciliegino, and Florence's own fiorentino tomatoes. In addition, the collection includes *Mini-Pizza*, *Nutella*, and a few other surprises.



Kevin Berlin with Robert Wilson, The Watermill Center, Water Mill.
Photo by David Nadal

When did you paint your first tomato?

Two weeks after the tragedy of 9/11, I found myself in Florence, Italy, setting up a studio above the historic Sant'Ambrogio market. At the time I was inspired by the icons of Italian culture and it was then that I gave tomatoes the more serious consideration that they deserve. So, 20 years ago.

What do you love about tomatoes?

Big question. The color red, of course. The extraordinary individual shape and form. As a sculptor I imagine each tomato on a monumental scale and appreciate that no two tomatoes are alike. The taste of an Italian salsa di pomodoro; which has been perfected over, what some say, a period of five hundred years. Perhaps



Kevin Berlin, *Tomato #3*, 2022. Gouache on hand-cut paper, pencil, signed, 9 in. x 10.5 in., (framed)

what I love the most is the pleasant feeling that each tomato brings. And that alone is enough.

Do you ever get bored painting a tomato?

No. Impossible. To me each tomato is a miracle. Each tomato is a new world. Each time I paint a tomato, I imagine I have never seen one before. As if each tomato went back to the beginning of time. That is the secret.



Kevin Berlin, *Tomato Dream*. Gouache on handcut paper, pencil signed, 9 in. x 10.5 in., (framed)