

Beyond Hyperreality

FORUM GALLERY of New York is now representing Claudio Bravo, the late Chilean artist known for his hyperrealist renderings of crumpled paper packages, draped fabrics, and serene still lifes.

This month, Forum is mounting a solo exhibition, through March 21, which features 15 paintings, three pastels, and five drawings. Among the highlights is *Stretchers*, a 2008 oil on canvas that pictures a grouping of wooden supports leaned against a wall in a light-filled room. Bravo's arrangement features two painted canvases, one entirely in golden yellow and the other in slate blue. This variation in color and texture married with strict geometric forms is classic Bravo.

When the artist began creating his paintings of colored paper packages—the progenitors of a work like *Stretchers*—in the early 1960s, he looked to Mark Rothko's color field paintings. *Stretchers* feels, in some ways, like a deconstructed Rothko seen through a hyperrealist lens.

Green Sofa, a 1991 pastel on paper, pictures the corner of a lavishly pillowed, jade brocade-upholstered couch. Bravo renders the nuances of the fabric down to the glint of gold thread in its ornate embroidery. The artist said that the objects he painted “transcend and magnify reality,” and his use of light—heavily influ-

enced by that of Spanish baroque painter Francisco de Zurbarán—makes them appear more than they are.

Conversely, his figures seem more like symbols

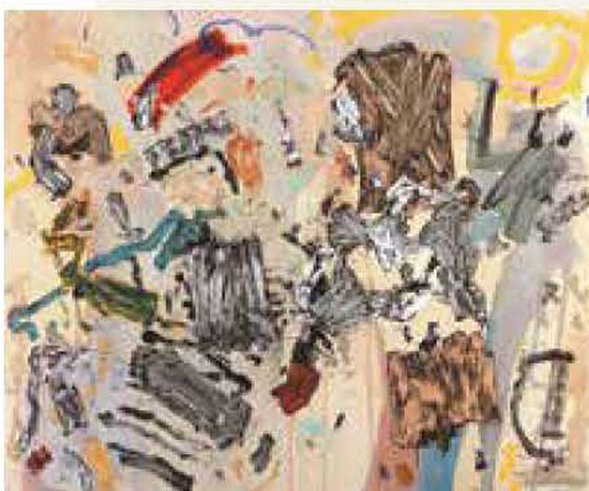


or conduits for feelings than strictly human. *Nude Male Leaning on Column* (1979, oil on canvas), another standout of the show, features two nudes seated in the expanse of a large loft. Seemingly at odds

with the practical objects of the space—filing cabinets, a harsh leather daybed, a long industrial table—the figures partake more of myth than of reality.

“Aha” Moments

“HOW DO we make meaning out of the seeming inexplicability of what's around us?” asks Doyle Gertjeansen. “My work deals with that ‘Aha!’ moment when we are on that cusp of experience

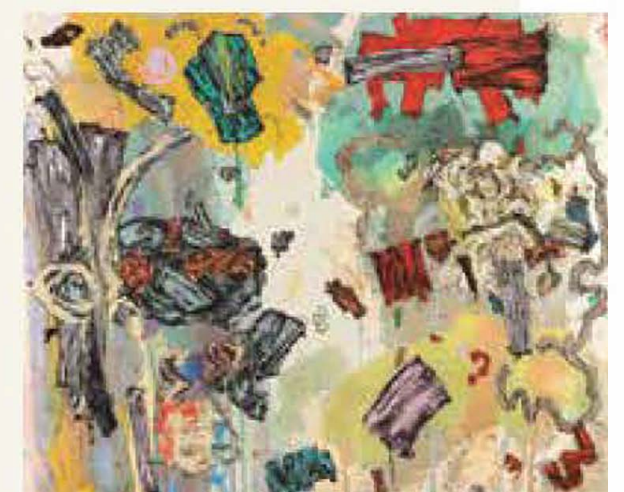


where a body of information coalesces into an idea. That's how we as human beings became what we are.” Spoken like the longtime teacher he is, Gertjeansen's words avoid

reductive explanations and instead point toward how we might experience his art. His exuberant mixed-media paintings—basically gestural abstraction but full of allusions to representation and narrative as well as to styles such as Color Field and Surrealism—invite the viewer to let their diverse elements coalesce in their vision and give rise to a joyous moment of participation.

Gertjeansen's latest paintings, a suite titled “Harbinger's Myth,” are on view at Callan Contemporary in New Orleans through February 28. Made up of washes, marks, and gestures, they use acrylic, char-

coal, and pastels, plus an unusual medium that the artist has been using since the mid-1990s, liquid graphite, which imparts to his paintings a paradoxical combination of liquidity and granularity. The influence of Arshile Gorky can be felt in “Harbinger's Myth” and is explicitly acknowledged in the title of one of the works, *Gorky's Dilemma* (2020).



A graduate of the studio and art history programs at the University of Minnesota, Gertjeansen was a professor of Fine Arts at the University of New Orleans for four decades, with 13 years spent as department chair. His paintings, drawings, monotypes, and sculptures have been shown in exhibitions around the world and have been acquired by prominent private, corporate, and institutional collections.