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DOYLE GERTJEJANSEN

Harbinger's Myth

OPENING RECEPTION: JANUARY 9TH, 2021 12-7 pm

EXHIBITION DATES: JANUARY 7TH - FEBRUARY 28TH



Beholding one of Doyle Gertjejansen's mixed-media paintings is akin to surveying the trajectory of modern and contemporary art in a single glance. Aspects of Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Color Field painting, Neo-expressionism, and Postmodern pastiche dialogue in his dynamic compositions, which, for all their sophistication, crackle with an elemental, visceral energy. Those senses of eclecticism and vigor underlie the artist's striking new exhibition at Callan Contemporary, *Harbinger's Myth*—a suite of paintings built around washes, marks, and gestures that flow from a confluence of deliberation and spontaneity. More personal and less critique-oriented than much of Gertjejansen's earlier work, their disparate marks are more dialectical than polarized. Though eclectic, their components speak the same visual and philosophical language, effectively conversing across the picture plane.

To these virtuosic artworks Gertjeansen brings a lifetime of inquiry and scholarship, grounded in a long and distinguished career in the academy. An MFA graduate in painting and art history from the University of Minnesota, he served as Professor of Fine Arts at the University of New Orleans for four decades, thirteen years of which he was department chair. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship as well as innumerable grants and awards, he has exhibited his paintings, drawings, monotypes, and sculptures in solo and group exhibitions around the world, with acquisitions into prominent private, corporate, and institutional collections.

The paintings in the current exhibition range from small to large scale, and while they are primarily gestural, they also incorporate recurring motifs that suggest elements of representation and narrative. They exude a confident authenticity, a directness of expression that recalls the drawings of Arshile Gorky. The surfaces are sensual with the varied textures of acrylic paint, charcoal, pastels, and an unusual medium the artist has employed since the mid-1990s: liquid graphite. Painstakingly applied, it manages simultaneously to convey fluidity and granularity, spontaneity and artifice, imparting the appearance of gestures within a gesture. Running parallel to their rich art-historical referentiality is a fresh (and given the trials of 2020, well-timed) infusion of joie de vivre and playfulness, which nevertheless remains linked to the artist's longstanding preoccupations—particularly his fascination with art-making as a cognitive leap. “How do we make meaning out of the seeming inexplicability of what's around us?” he poses. “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.” - Richard Speer