

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Charley Brown

May 5-28, 2016

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is pleased to announce its second exhibition of abstract paintings by the San Francisco artist Charley Brown. Brown's 2013 show, *Divergence*, showed the artist, a virtuoso draftsman and painter recognized for his talent from childhood, and skilled in many areas of artmaking during his peripatetic, diverse five-decade career, taking on abstraction as a technical and aesthetic challenge. Abstraction allows Brown to explore formal ideas always present in the representational work, but in a condensed and direct way. The curved black oil paint lines set against white backgrounds in these large paintings of his *Intersections* and *Epistrophe* series (named after a Thelonious Monk piece, referring to word repetition as a poetic or rhetorical device) suggest, from a distance, enlarged detail photos of typography or pictograms; seen close up, however, they assert their painterly materiality and Brown's always impeccable craftsmanship.

Brown's graphic use of black lines or gestures recalls paintings by the Abstract Expressionists Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, and Pierre Soulages, as well as the oilstick drawings (or, indeed, the curved Corten steel sculptures) of the postminimalist Richard Serra. These are artists whom Brown readily acknowledges as influences ("I can fake a Motherwell, but it won't be the same."), but his works are less about the drama of gesture, and more about how a restricted set of visual elements can be greater than the sum of its parts. Brown's deliberate process is the opposite of AbEx *Sturm-und-Drang* (Storm-and-Stress) improvisation, and might be likened to visual music—Stravinsky and Monk are two of the artist's favorites—rather than choreographic calligraphy, a la Pollock, and he similarly aims for a balance of classical and modern in his work. The paintings' compositions begin with small sketches in pencil on paper. The most promising ones, enlarged by photocopying, are adjusted and refined. They are then copied onto transparency film and projected onto specially prepared canvases that have surfaced with many coats of acrylic modeling paste, each sanded, and then finished with several coats of clear varnish. The contours are transferred to the canvas, dot by dot, using china markers. Brown applies black oil paint mixed, not out of the tube, with printmaking brayers, rather than brushes, going over each area repeatedly in order to eliminate unpainted 'holidays,' or white spots. He uses no tape to mask shapes, creating crisp edges only with rollers, blurred edges with a fingertip or other tool, and erasing with a rag wrapped around a fingertip. If this additive-subtractive technique sounds like monotype printmaking technique, it is essentially the same, although Brown discovered the method through his use of *sgraffito*, scratching through paint, on a restaurant mural commission. In some works Brown creates shadowy forms using a brayer with almost no paint, the repetition of forms spaced one brayer circumference apart creating a visual vibration, implying movement and change. Howard Risotti, a professor emeritus of contemporary art and critical theory at Virginia Commonwealth University, sees Brown not as an ironic stylistic ransacker in the current appropriationist fashion, cynical about the art of past and present, but rather as a contemporary

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artist working within the long tradition of artists who found and find in their art meaning and importance in an often otherwise chaotic-seeming universe:

By treating style not as a reproducible, endlessly repeatable device severed from all historical roots, but as a way to cast the light of past traditions onto the present, [Brown] infuses his paintings with historical background giving to them a sense of the weight and import of history.

Charles Brown was born in 1945 in Barstow, California. He studied at the Doxiadis School of Design, in Athens, Greece, and California College of the Arts, in Oakland, CA, receiving both his BA and MA in Art from Humboldt State University, in Arcata, CA. In addition to exhibiting in galleries across the United States and Europe, including the New Museum, New York City, he has painted murals commissioned by the Smithsonian Institute, in Washington D.C.; the Main Library branch of the San Francisco Public Library system, in Civic Center, San Francisco; and Stanford University, in Stanford, CA.

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Charley Brown

b. Barstow, California 1945

EDUCATION

1971	Humboldt State University, Arcata, California - M.A. in Art
1970	Humboldt State University, Arcata, California - B.A. in Art
1966-1967	California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, California
1965	Doxiadis School of Design, Athens, Greece

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016	Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2013	Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2006, 2004, 2002	Larry Evans Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2003	City Picture Frame, San Francisco, CA
1998, 1996, 1994	Larry Evans/James Willis Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1985	Albrecht Museum, St. Joseph, MO
1983	F.I.A.C., Jacque Masol Gallery, Paris, France
1982, 1981, 1980	Penryn Gallery, Seattle, WA
1979, 1975, 1972	
1971	
1982, 1977, 1974	Feingarten Galleries, Los Angeles, CA
1973	
1981	Dan Turk Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA
1978	Brustlin Workshop, San Francisco, CA
1978	Gryphon Gallery Ltd., Denver, CO
1976	William Sparrow Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA
1975	Gallerie Royale, Vancouver, B.C.
1974	Coral Casino Club, Santa Barbara, CA
1973	Galleries Schreiner, Basel, Switzerland
1972	Monterey Peninsula Museum, CA
1971	Zoomfauk Gallery, San Francisco, WA
1971, 1970	Humboldt State University, Humboldt, CA
1971	University of Nevada, Reno, NV

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SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2016 Dynamic Gestures: Action Painting in the 21st Century, Triton Museum
of Art, Santa Clara, CA
Shasta College Art Gallery, Redding, CA
- 1982 Extended Sensibilities, The New Museum, New York, NY

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
Notre Dame University Museum, Southbend, IN
San Mateo College, San Mateo, CA
University of New Mexico Museum of Art, Albuquerque, NM

SELECTED MURAL COMMISSIONS

- New Main Library, San Francisco, CA
Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.
Bellagio Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
Wynn Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, Japan
Sony Entertainment World Headquarters, Culver City, CA
American Embassy, Nicosia, Cyprus
Grand Casino, Deauville, France
Pan Pacific Hotel, Yokohama, Japan
Stanford University, School of Education, Palo Alto, CA